1905





Books and Things



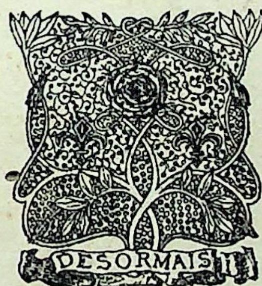


Books and Things

A Collection of Stray Remarks

By G. S. Street

Author of "The Autobiography of a Boy," "The Trials of the Bantocks," "A Book of Essays," etc., etc.



LONDON
DUCKWORTH & CO.
1905

Note

WHEN last I printed a collection of papers which had been already exposed to the notice or indifference of my contemporaries, I was careful to apologise for so doing. But the critics took, for the most part, so kind and encouraging a view of the proceeding that now, *si celeres quatiunt pennas*, so to speak, if they think I go too far, I must say they have themselves to blame for my persistence.

"The Provincial Mind" appeared in the *Quarterly Review*; *The Times* has allowed me to use material contributed to its literary supplement in the articles on *Don Juan*, Sterne, and Fielding; I reprint a few short articles from the *Academy*, and some lengthier efforts from the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Pall Mall Magazine*.

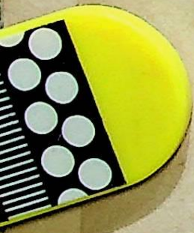
G. S. S.



Contents

MAINLY OF BOOKS

MAINLY OF OTHER THINGS



MAINLY OF BOOKS

B

Books and Things

I

THE POOR PUBLIC

IT is commonly called the great public, but I am rather sorry for it and would show my sympathy. It is so often attacked, poor thing, and I feel that it cannot defend itself. I see it in imagination a poor, dumb, scolded animal, looking at me, a possible champion, with beautiful, expressive eyes. "Poor public," I say gently, "what a shame!" But "brute!" shout the other writers, "many-headed beast! stupid, pig-headed, coarse, vulgar, imperceptive dolt! Get out!" Dear, dear . . . my acquaintance is happily miscellaneous, if I may affirm it without boasting for the sake of the argument, and I converse in

my time with lawyers, doctors, sailors, soldiers, shopkeepers, porters, men of fashion, statesmen, and shampooers at the Turkish bath. I might lengthen the list and add several sorts of ladies. Now all these people—for I have excluded artists in the ordinary sense of writers and painters and actors—make up, I suppose, the public. But my general impression of their conversation is anything but one of pigheadedness, vulgarity, and the rest of it. How comes it, then, that the public has exposed itself to these unfortunate imputations?

But a difficulty in the way of clear thinking on the matter must be dealt with first. *Are* these people the public? Not a single man Jack of them regards himself as belonging to the public. Every one of them, of course, directly opposes to himself the public which is outside of his own calling, and in that sense is pretty sure, he also, to speak of the public with contempt. But, beyond that, speak to any one of them about the public in connection with a book or a play, his withers are unwrung. It never occurs to him that you may include himself. I remember, contrariwise, hearing a popu-

lar actress in some one-act play pronounce a long eulogy on the public, how dear and generous and sympathetic it was. The author, cunning rogue, no doubt had said to himself that the poor public was always being attacked, that he, on the other hand, would eulogise it: that it would be touched and charmed. But not a bit of it. The speech fell flat. No one in the theatre thought that he or she was intended, or took the least pleasure in hearing the public praised, and if any superior people were there they, no doubt, were disgusted. And we dislike to think, indeed, that any agreeable, responsive person with whom we talk belongs to the guilty body.

Still, there it is; we cannot suppose it to be a subjective hallucination, vanishing whenever we test it in the flesh. There is an amorphous, shifting, changing body, the public, which influences so sadly our books and painting and plays, our art. But what does the influence really mean? Given the public at the worst of the accusation, how much does it signify? If a man has it in him greatly to express himself in a book or a picture, it

needs little of a public to get the one printed, the other furnished with canvas and paint. If his first aim is a fortune, he will turn aside—but then he is not your artist. We are reduced to the theatre, about which there has been such a coil of late. A play cannot get itself produced without an anticipated public of many thousands, true! I fancy managers are apt to put the public's standard on too low a level; plays with ideas in them have succeeded even in our day, and some which merely repeated an empty formula have failed. I would even say a word for the public which makes successes of "musical comedies." My experience of contemporary examples is not large. I confess that one or two I have seen appeared to me to fall below any conceivable level of civilised entertainment. But in three consecutive years I have been at Brighton when a company touring the provinces with the Gilbert and Sullivan operas has been there. Now, surely no one will dispute that when the English art of the nineteenth century in its latter half is soundly estimated, these Gilbert and Sullivan operas will show very high in

its achievements. Pass the greatest artists of the period—Tennyson, Meredith, Swinburne, Whistler—and you will not have a long roll to read before you come to them. They are almost perfect in their way, and their way is not a common one; the wit, musical and verbal, is a true wit, delightful to the intelligence. For myself, I admit that my interest is as sentimental as critical. I was brought up on them, I know them by heart, they are full of associations for me. Well, they came to Brighton, not an intellectual place, so to speak, with no such centre of culture in it as you find in Manchester or Birmingham. They were extremely well done, I must add in gratitude, by players who had learned to sing and relished the jokes; I forgave one or two of them—even I, with my memories—for not being Mr. Grossmith or Miss Jessie Bond. Very well, they came to Brighton. Empty seats? A bored audience? A longing for this or that contemporary nullity? No! Packed houses, continuous laughter, hushed attention to the songs, vociferous applause—the last night of the visit a regular ovation. I maintain that

even in comic musical pieces there is a public for better things.

But to resume. I think managers of theatres rate public intelligence too low. But I grant that as a whole the theatre public is not an intelligent, an artistic public. Whatever our race has been, or will be, it now has little sense of art. I am inclined to think that its sense of beauty is keener — a little keener — than it was, but not its intelligence. The idea, the genuine working of thought, is not what will attract it in a play. A Review published a monthly list of imposing signatures of people—eminent solicitors and so on—who deplored and protested against the state of the theatre in England, and wanted this and that done to remedy it. I should have thought that they could have afforded a theatre between them if they wished for one ; if I were a millionaire I should engage my favourite players, regardless of expense, to play me Congreve's comedies. The hope of getting anything done in a public way merely to make the theatre more intelligent and thoughtful I believe to be vain. Intelligence *laudatur et*

alget in England to-day. Then what did I mean by suggesting that even in the playhouse the public might not be quite such a criminal as the poor thing is accused of being? Why, this. I believe that a great play, a play great in terms of its own art, will find a public here or anywhere. Not merely a clever play, an ideaed play, or a play with beautiful thoughts and moments in it. That may miss its chance, or sometimes lack a chance altogether. But a play which is a great play, with passionate drama and dramatic passion in it—that will not lack a chance.

So it appears that this poor public you are reviling does not prevent the greatest art, but merely discourages the second order. It is a pity. But if art does not exist for the public, neither does the public exist for art. There are other virtues than a sense of beauty and a joy in intelligence. You have scolded it enough. Here—poor public—here is a biscuit.

II

THE PROVINCIAL MIND

IT is certain that all educated and thoughtful people are confronted at times with modes of thought, with points of view, with systems of argument, or with habits of expression, which, for one reason or another, they call provincial; it is equally certain that, if asked for some definition of the term which should include all admitted instances of its application and yet possess some historical and logical propriety, they would be severely posed for an answer. I, no more than they, am prepared with any brief and precise formula which shall meet the occasion; but, since it would be futile to pursue the subject at all without some sort of agreement as to its scope, I must endeavour at least to supply the reader with some approximate equivalent of that desiderated and unattainable certainty. But I

must premise that this attempt will make for convenience of argument rather than for precision of thought; that my examples may not always correspond with fine-drawn exactness to my general remarks; that suggestion more than information will be the upshot; in fine, that while it is hoped there may be something of philosophic merit in the following pages, scientific accuracy is not to be expected.

Living in an age and country of compromises, we find here also a practical utility in the mean. The original sense of "provincial" is no longer useful in discussing questions of intellect or taste, except as applied to the material on which intellect and taste are exercised. The telegraph, the newspaper, and the railway have brought the metropolis and the provinces so near together that very little can be argued as to a man's taste and mode of thought from his place of abode. To live away from the metropolis is no longer necessarily to be remote from its culture, from the centre of things. In that sense the provincial need not be, and in the case of active and educated minds very seldom is, *paganus*. We shall find

in this section of our meditations that there is more to be said for his advantages than his disadvantages. This section, however, is not an extensive one. When we come to the secondary and enlarged meanings of the word, we discover that it has been taken to include almost every limitation and fault of taste and intelligence. Matthew Arnold, for example, finds a note of provinciality in Addison on account of the commonplaceness of his ideas. At this point, surely, comprehensiveness merges into nothingness. If commonplaceness of ideas be in itself provincial, then is Horace, for example, provincial, which is absurd. Even to take Matthew Arnold's own definition of provinciality, that it is ignorance of the best, no acquaintance with the best will preserve a certain order of intellect from dealing in commonplaces; and, since certain intellects, dealing with commonplace ideas, have produced certain of the world's most cherished masterpieces of expression, perhaps we need not deplore the fact. But of Matthew Arnold there will be something to say in our connection later. Again, provincial is often taken to mean

the antithesis to catholic or universal. That also is not convenient. The true antithesis—at least in matters of art—to the universal is the personal; and although the personal, that is to say, the introspective or self-regarding, writer may be encouraged in his tendency by a provincial state in the literal sense, he is sometimes, as in Byron's case, a man eminently versed in general life and society and well acquainted with the best.

So that we find that, while we must extend the denotation of the word from its original sense, we must extend with caution, and it seems well to extend it along its natural lines; that is to say, not to lose sight of an implication of position, not to confuse it altogether with a vague antithesis to cultivated or well-informed. The flexibility, the lack of definiteness in our language supplies most of us, who are loose thinkers, with synonyms enough and to spare; it will be no ill thing to invest this word, so far as we are able, with a particular and distinctive meaning. We shall look, then, for provinciality in writers or in persons otherwise articulate as an outcome of associations

with places, sets of people, or circumstances; and we shall not have to do with limitations of intellect or taste except in so far as they come from such associations. When we praise the results, we shall mean that the associations are properly and happily operative. But since it is best to keep, so far as possible, to the ordinary uses of language, and since provinciality is almost always used in an ill sense, we shall attend chiefly to the results which mar an otherwise good thing, to the results which come from associations irrelevantly and mischievously operative. We shall observe such results of too intense or too limited associations in very diverse spheres; we shall observe a provinciality of class, of coterie, of education, as well as the lack of it; a provinciality of patriotism and anti-patriotism, of platitude and paradox. The scope will be wide enough; but, since the whole subject might fill many volumes, it is well to confine ourselves in the main to the most practical field, that is, to English life and letters as they are now or have been in the last few generations.

In the days before the common use of printed

books, when living remote from local centres meant living remote from possibilities of culture, from learned teachers and famous lecturers, the disadvantages were no doubt unmitigated. But those days were in the Middle Ages; and then, happily, local centres were not infrequent and philosophers and other lecturers were peripatetic. When we come to the period when books were to be had with tolerable ease, but communications were difficult and men had to abide with the friends and acquaintances their local business gave them, to live a provincial life was to the man of exceptional talent and mental energy at once a torture and a stimulus. A torture, because he found little oral and personal sympathy; a stimulus, because, being thrown in upon himself, and being sharply and constantly reminded of the folly and the prejudices of those in the far rear of his advancement, he was set the more sternly to assert good reason and enlightenment against them. Often such a stray unhappy genius may have wasted in futile repinings and bitterness the powers which, in sympathetic surroundings, might have worked to a brilliant end. But

often, also, one who in happier circumstances had melted away in urbane discourses and pleasant *jeux d'esprit*, has been wrought upon by intellectual and emotional discomfort, the direct result of a provincial life, to strike hard and successfully against these things, and has so got fame for himself and left us some fine possession. Which, in the latter case, had been his happier lot is a question we need not go about to decide; we at least are gainers. A man in such a case finds himself and finds his age as he sees it. Imagine Burns a wealthy cosmopolitan peer: what should we have had of him? A few careless love-songs and drinking songs, it is likely; it is possible some ordered philosophical work from that wide and inquiring mind; but not the immortal pathos he has left us, and not that masterpiece of satirical invective, "Holy Willie's Prayer."

As for living in the provinces nowadays, I think a cultivated and thoughtful man is to be congratulated on the fact. Only very exceptional circumstances can prevent his visiting and being visited by his intellectual peers; and the thought of his age is easily accessible in

print. He is no more apart from the movement or the crisis of his day than the man in the city, and he has readier to his sympathies the homely humanising interests and anxieties of common life outside his own house. To the general intellectual interests, political interests, and so forth, of the town man, who has no neighbours and meets his acquaintances in a hurry, the provincial man may add all sorts of kindly gossip from village and country-side. He may be exposed to the temptations of conceit which come from a narrow and too admiring circle, but he need not be so exposed, and if he be a humane man he will not be; for it is likely his country neighbours will think poorly enough of his intellectual achievements. The London man—for I am speaking of England—is just as much exposed to mischievous admirers if he has a taste for them, and if he be a man of exceptional prominence; while he may still have something of the conceit of place which lingers yet as to some extent the provinciality of the Londoner—the delusion that comparative proximity to greater or more important men still confers an advantage. But

how little provinciality in the original sense tells either way may be guessed from the vagueness of these speculations.

A word should be added in this place of the confusion which is sometimes made between the provincial nature of a writer's subject-matter and provincial qualities of mind. When such subject-matter is the result of prolonged residence in the place where it is found, the writer may have been exposed to the advantages and disadvantages already adumbrated. So that while, in instances too numerous to need example, the writer—poet or novelist—who writes of provincial things has shown exceptional concentration and devoted insight, in others he has shown a narrowness of view and pettiness of feeling. In contemporary writers we should attribute such faults to other associations than those of place; but plenty of examples may be found in the "Kailyard school," and in certain lovers of the slums. There is, however, no inevitable reason why the writer on provincial themes should be in any way provincial. What subjects more provincial than Miss Austen's? What writer more free

from the faults commonly called provincial? Or, to take a better instance, *Cranford* is occupied for the most part with the utmost pettinesses of provincial life; but there is an all-embracing humanity in Mrs. Gaskell, which being properly restrained in expression is the very reverse of provinciality. Such writers may suffer in popularity: the excellent idiom of Dorsetshire may have lost the poet Barnes some lazy readers; but that is not to the purpose.

I pass to the next division, which in modern England is the most important of all—the provinciality of class. It embraces more than snobbery. In England, where there is no caste in the proper sense of the word—caste renders snobbery impossible—where changes of class are constant, and where small distinctions of class are still fervently, though no longer rigidly, preserved, snobbery is both rampant and subtly pervasive. The highest—technically—and the lowest classes are comparatively free from it, but elsewhere it dims our social life with all kinds of irrational distinctions and reservations. Consequently he

who looks suspiciously for it will seldom fail to find it. But provinciality of class is wider than snobbery, which it includes, because it is produced by any limitation, coming from class associations, of understanding and knowledge, and does not imply necessarily any personal animus or mean admirations and dislikes.

This provinciality of class has indeed an importance in our national life which transcends any question of taste or literary achievement. It is a price we pay in our government for the advantage of being governed by men who are above the temptations of material corruption, and whose word can generally be trusted as a matter of course. As a rule the price is not heavy; but there are occasions, easily to be imagined, when a want of first-hand knowledge of popular emotions and points of view may handicap national policy. The authentic statesman, of whatever class, is not subject to this provinciality; but authentic statesmen are rare.

This sort of provinciality shows itself occasionally in the political deliveries of public writers, and, where it has the least excuse, in

criticisms of literary work. In the latter case it is often connected with an academic provinciality, of which I shall speak later, but may be considered, for the credit of academic provinciality, as essentially distinct. The ideal of the "English gentleman," derived perhaps from the ideal of the perfect knight professed by post-mediæval chivalry, is worthy and wholesome. It is true that we are finding cause to regret that the ideal, as understood by our schoolmasters, should exclude knowledge and intellectual ability; and it is certainly a pity that it too often leads our critics, even some of the most eminent of them, to disparage unduly any literary work which, in their opinion, conflicts with it. If the work does truly so conflict, the fact may be rightly mentioned, but it should not overshadow merit in all other directions. For instance, some of the criticism lavished on Mr. Rudyard Kipling's book, *Stalky and Co.*, illustrated the provinciality of class working narrowly but naturally enough. An instance of this provinciality in a more degraded form may be taken from a weekly paper, which remarked

some time ago that the Americans were growing tired of being "governed by a gentleman." Such an appalling piece of impertinence is not of course typical, but it is worth mentioning as an instance of the dangers which this class preoccupation has for ill-regulated minds and manners.

But it is more profitable to observe a weakness in a great than in a little intelligence. There is no such interesting and remarkable instance of the provinciality of class among English writers as Thackeray, because no other writer approaching his genius of observation and presentment has had it in anything like the same degree. When Thackeray writes of contemporary life—in three parts of his work, that is—he writes as an Englishman of the upper middle class. Whatever else is there, the shrewd and comprehensive observation, the gay or melancholy or subtle humour, the perfect ear for dialogue, the perfect artistry in narrative English, always the upper middle class is there also. If he had occasion to write of the titular aristocracy, its titles seem to have haunted him, and he must needs

approach it, either with an air of ironical servility or with an air of apologetic patronage. So obsessed was he by this distinction of class that, artist and observer as he was, he could never fully use the advantage of our aristocracy for a novelist, which consists in its comparative freedom from preoccupation with matters irrelevant to the simple passions. Again, if he wrote of the classes technically beneath his own, he could never approach them fairly and squarely as composed of human beings. Servants, tradespeople, and the like, he seems to have thought of as themselves rather ridiculous, if not despicable. Their love-affairs and ambitions were with him themes for good-natured banter, and that only. The artist in him triumphed over all this of course. If his provinciality of class was great, his natural powers were greater. But undeniably the fault is there, and is a reason why his *Esmond*—even his *Virginians*—with far less of life and knowledge in them than there is in *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*—are read by some of us with the more continuous pleasure, because he has gone back to a time

when this provinciality had no occasion to appear.

It is difficult to mention Thackeray and not to say something about Dickens; and it happens that he comes into the argument, in so far as he shows a bias against the "upper classes." He is a little inclined—reversing the dictum of Tennyson's farmer—to say that the rich "in a loomp is bad," and that irrationally, with no consistent economic creed to back him up; in short, he reflected the Radicalism of his day. But happily the largest part, and all the best, of his work concerned the poor, or at least those who were not rich, so that his provinciality is in the result only sporadic. His case serves, however, to remind us that provinciality of class is by no means confined, among English writers, to one class. Mr. Barrie, in that charming idyll of his, *The Little Minister*, is free enough from provincial provinciality, so to speak, as he is in his *Thrums* book, and as some of his imitators are not; but in the rather absurd passages where he brings in members of the "upper" class, he treats himself to a mode of class provinciality.

So in his play, *The Admirable Crichton*, otherwise so refreshing because it contains an idea, he has a rather malignant fourth act which lacks the fairness of the true comic spirit. In criticism this aspect of class provinciality shows itself among certain writers who seem to hold a brief for the lower classes, rather artificially, because they do not themselves belong to them or profess any particular knowledge of them. But so it is; provided a book concerns itself with a remote village or a London slum, and abounds in dialect which, whether like its professed models or not, is at least unfamiliar to the critics, some of them will always acclaim the profound observation and humanity of the author. But in coming to this odd fashion we touch the bottom of the subject.

The division which seems to me nearest to class provinciality, and which, though far from rivalling it in extent, is for questions of taste almost as important, is academic provinciality. By this I mean a perversion or limitation of view which results from the associations of university culture and scholarship, associations

either direct and professional, or immediately derived from those in direct and professional touch with universities. The word academic is therefore literally correct, but it has a side advantage in suggesting Matthew Arnold's well-known opinion of academies. It suggests, in fact, his essay on "The Literary Influence of Academies." Now, that essay is an important *locus classicus* on the subject of my essay; and the reader may have wondered that, having mentioned Matthew Arnold at an earlier stage, I did not proceed to discuss it. But since I did not adopt his definition of provinciality there was no necessity; and convenience suggested that I should leave the essay to this place, because I saw in it the note of academic provinciality. It is with no audacious wish to turn the tables on that great writer that I make this assertion, but because, as in Thackeray's case, the fault is made the clearer by being set in a heap of merits. And it certainly is not with Matthew Arnold as with fair Amoret, that "he is the thing that he despises.' He was free from the national fault which he rebuked, but in the

very fulness of his culture, the very fervency of his zeal, he was betrayed into a fault of another kind.

He himself would hardly have allowed the propriety of the term "academic provinciality," because with him provinciality meant the absence of academies. He believed that for this reason it afflicted the whole of our literature, and that even our greatest men of genius would have been somewhat greater for the restraining influence of an academy. If it could be shown that an academy would have corrected our prevailing demerits of formlessness and eccentricity, or that an academy ensured knowledge, the theory would be very largely true. Even so, I should have preferred, as a question of words, not to adopt Matthew Arnold's use of the word provinciality, taking ignorance to be barbarous rather than provincial. An unkind critic might say that much of our literature, that a little even of its best, is barbarous for want of knowledge. So much is true; whether a literary academy would have removed the reproach is doubtful.

Academic provinciality is of two kinds. One

kind is an excessive regard for mere information, mere reading, and in consequence a contempt for ignorance which extends to the belittling of fine qualities sometimes joined to ignorance. Your academic is apt to forget that information without understanding is at least as poor a thing as understanding without information. The other kind is an excessive devotion to system, to completeness of presentment, to apparent logic. The academic provincial is always *κατέχων θέσιν*. It is to be said of both these faults that, in the balance of English taste and intelligence, they are faults on the right side. Beyond all question ignorance is the chief vice of our popular contemporary writings and the parent of their innumerable vulgarities. So little is knowledge in evidence or in demand that even among our professed critics in our professed "literary" papers, a tendency to regard literature as bounded by the last catch-shilling novel is emphatic. It is this prevailing ignorance, unconscious and shameless, among us which, in matters intellectual and artistic, is ever widening the gulf between the few and the

many—to the loss of both sides. Moreover, we are beginning to find out that contempt of knowledge is not an advantage even in our practical life. The glory of the showy and incompetent amateur is somewhat dimmed among us ; the outer darkness of the expert is receiving rays of popular recognition. In this regard, then, the spirit of the academic provincial may be by accident a blessing. Nor need his excessive regard for logic and system disturb us. There also the general run of us are very much to seek. We have come to regard the practical common-sense on which we pride ourselves as something so superior to logic and systems, even so much opposed to them, that we are in danger, it seems, of forgetting the relations of cause and effect in very important concerns. And in such matters as criticism of literature, of painting, and the drama, and so forth, we are, to use an intelligent colloquialism, "all over the place."

By accident, then, the academic provincial is in general to be welcomed. But what there was of provinciality in Matthew Arnold was not to be welcomed, because he stood before

England as the type of ideal culture and pointed the way of intellectual salvation; because he was one of the very few great critics we have ever had who could gain an extensive hearing; so that whatever tended to mar the perfect reasonableness, the sweetness and light, of his utterance, tended to spoil the effect of his mission. Did it fail? This is not the place to answer the question; but we remember that it was "the depression of pure intelligence" among his countrymen (the phrase is in his essay on Heine) which was most present to his militant consciousness, and we see that pure intelligence has even less to say in our national life to-day than it had in the sixties and seventies. However this may be, it can hardly be denied that Matthew Arnold betrayed a note or so of academic provinciality as we have diagnosed it. Take, for example, the opinion of Byron, whose genius, as genius, he appreciated to the full. He found him "so empty of matter," and traced that emptiness to want of knowledge and implicitly to want of reading. Mr. Rowland Prothero has shown us that Byron's reading would hardly have shamed

a professional student; but surely to say of Byron, introspective and personal though his genius was, that the author of the *Vision of Judgment* or of *Don Juan* was empty of matter, is to carry regard for mere knowledge somewhat far. Again, Matthew Arnold is concerned to show that intelligence is more likely than genius to be followed worthily by disciples and imitators. We do not dispute it; great genius is a thing apart. But Matthew Arnold, κατέχων θέσιν, asks what was the sequel to the "literature of genius, as we may call it, stretching from Marlowe to Milton," and answers that it was "our provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth century." "Now, really," as he himself says of a passage in Ruskin, "what a piece of extravagance all that is!" Fielding, Pope, Gibbon, and Sterne second-rate and provincial! That they were inferior to Shakespeare may be allowed. The phrase means nothing if it does not mean that they were second-rate in the contemptuous sense. Matthew Arnold could not have meant that soberly and deliberately; but he was concerned to make his theory complete, and sacrificed ex-

actness to a touch of academic provinciality.

His instance is the most perfect, because so finely relieved. We might pursue the characteristic into many deliveries of many lesser men. We might detect it in an appearance—here and there—of self-conscious superiority or impertinent knowingness, amusing but not urbane, and might go on to speculate as to the effect of comparative isolation and immunity of life in preserving the attributes of clever adolescence to old age. But we should not do wisely, partly because we have other themes to our hand, and partly because all this is the defect of a quality which at present is very rare and valuable. Academic provinciality is a far better thing than its opposite, the pretentious ignorance which is proof against rebuke.

On the provinciality of the coterie, the militant essayist might say provoking things. Even the essayist who would fain be agreeable to his fellow-men is likely, on this subject, to annoy some few of them. The most prominent of all coteries have been those formed by men of letters, or by those interested, or appearing

to be interested, in things literary. The quarrels of authors have commonly been quarrels of coteries, formed of people personally acquainted, or at least in some personal sympathy. We must not go too far back, but we will permit ourselves to go back to Doctor Johnson. Doctor Johnson found room in his extensive brain for prejudices of all kinds, and his overwhelming personality impressed these prejudices on his coterie. They were not seldom prejudices of a merely personal origin, irrelevant to the literary judgments in which they found expression, and therefore the coterie which promulgated the judgments was in so far provincial. It was the more conspicuously provincial in some few of these matters, because Doctor Johnson's great influence made almost invariably for the correction of provinciality—for masculine judgment and good sense and sound morality. It was the coterie more particularly devoted to his friend Samuel Richardson which showed how provincial a coterie may become, wholly absorbed in the master's one theme, hymning his praises till the high notes ended in a shriek, hysterical with

alarm and rage when his greater rival and crushing satirist came into view. It may be said that the contemporary disparagement of Fielding and of Sterne was the provinciality of coteries, among them Horace Walpole's—not, of course, his large and cosmopolitan social set, but the section of it which exchanged opinions about literature. He is by no means to be included in an earlier division of our subject; writers in our times who have found a snobbery of exclusiveness in him have forgotten the altogether different constitution of society in his day, or have been impervious to the whimsical irony which lightens all that he says on matters of social interest. Horace Walpole had no provinciality of class in our meaning of the phrase, but he was a man of fastidious taste in manners and in the minor ethics, and associated by choice with those who satisfied the taste and did not provoke the fastidiousness. What he heard of Johnson's social customs, and still more what he heard of Fielding's, repelled him; and not having our advantage of perspective, he underrated their work. So did those of his friends who cared

for letters. It was the provinciality of a coterie which was as little provincial as any recorded or existing.

The war of poets in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was essentially a war of coteries. Byron, Shelley, and Thomas Moore on one side, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey on the other, in spite of all the cross-divisions which individual genius and real intellectual interest would have made, were led by personal motives to form hotly contesting factions. Moore, of course, was no friend of Shelley, but we may assume that it was Byron's personal influence which prevented his being an enemy. On both sides continued, systematic, deliberate depreciation of work because of personal dislike—the provinciality of coterie at its deadliest. We might say that Shelley was merely a sufferer if we did not remember that most brilliant of wicked parodies, *Peter Bell the Third*. But Shelley was the victim of a provinciality of coterie from which Byron was free. Like some other great lyric poets, he was neither a profound nor an original philosopher; but the Godwin coterie impelled him to excursions in

social philosophy which may be called provincial without erring on the side of harshness. A curious cross-division of conviction and achievement is that Byron should have stood forth as the champion of the classic tradition. But whatever works or opinions were to be criticised, ever since Southey wrote his personal libels on Shelley and Byron in 1816, we find this bitter personal hostility directing judgments and inflaming language. That is the provinciality of coterie.

The same period, or one immediately antecedent, saw the opening roars of critical Edinburgh answered anon from Albemarle Street. It is the fashion to decry those hardy scrimmagers whose battle-pieces occupy so much of the old Reviews; and of course their proper inclusion in a discussion about the provinciality of coteries can hardly be disputed. Political publications in intention though the Reviews were, we think it unfair to attribute the fierceness of writers indubitably interested in literature for its own sake to political predisposition, and not rather to the more human influence of personal association and sympathy.

But if they were guilty of ferocity in their language and of narrowness in their judgments, and were very far from fulfilling Matthew Arnold's requirements of the true critic, they certainly had a double dose of that "vivacity" on which he once congratulated himself. When you can permit yourself to write of an author that he has "exhausted every species of sensual gratification," and "drained the cup of sin even to its bitterest dregs," you are not a very calm or collected critic, but you are in your way an amusing writer. Disproportionate savagery in these matters may be regretted, but let us not be too deeply shocked; these good folks doubtless said more than they meant, and these little excitements must have cheered many a dull moment. They have passed out of our manners; and sometimes, in the level dullness of our prints, one almost wishes them back.

As the mind, pondering on coteries, follows the years after Byron's death, it lingers inevitably in Holland House. It may be said that the sterling qualities of host and hostess, and the personal affection they inspired, were

strong ties in that brilliant circle. Nevertheless, that coterie was far more political than personal, and stood so largely for the whole Whig party that mention of it in this place may be thought irrelevant. Hardly so; for politics, especially among the Whigs, were then an affair of coteries rather than of parties; and it is to be observed that that part of political provinciality which is the irrelevant depreciation or exaltation of non-political work on political grounds disappeared along with the coterie. We all remember Macaulay's attack on Croker's edition of Boswell and on Johnson himself. Mr. Meredith has recently attacked the present government: would any of its supporters on that account depreciate Mr. Meredith's works? But the coterie of Holland House was too notable and valuable a centre of wit and intellect for its occasional provinciality to count for much against it.

The decay of the fierce fighting spirit which animated criticism in Byron's day has left even literary coteries of more recent years tolerably free from the provinciality of excessive de-

preciation. The Mills and Carlyles may have been inclined to exalt themselves and their friends, but not to attack their opponents over-fiercely or unfairly on any literary issue. From time to time, however, intellectual and artistic fashions appear which their advocates will push with a provincial zeal. Such a provinciality, for example, did much to prevent the appreciation of Ibsen's plays in this country. A coterie of his admirers, exulting in a rather cheaply acquired philosophy, found a new heaven and earth in these plays, and proclaimed aloud their rather absurd discovery. So the British public, which, left alone, might have perceived in some measure Ibsen's mastery of dramatic effects, hearing this cry of "new ideas," was frightened away. Since it is my habit, however, to look for good in all things, it may be added that, although the less discreet of these admirers and of their opponents divided a rather plentiful stock of ignorance between them, it is something in our country nowadays that ideas of any kind, even "new ideas," should attract any public attention. A like merit may be claimed for another

coterie, or set of coteries, which it occurs to me to mention. Starting from the late Mr. Oscar Wilde, a habit of paradox and attempted epigram spread over a large portion of the more or less educated inhabitants of London in the nineties. It resulted, of course, in a great deal of silliness and of irritation to the judicious. Mr. Wilde himself, a man of fine intellect and of marvellously ready and light-playing wit, carried this fashion with distinction. With his imitators it was apt to become a nuisance. Ineffectual wit is destructive of agreeable intercourse. An affected horror of the commonplace is an insult to humanity: love and life and death are commonplace. Wit, even true wit, is inappropriate on certain themes: "nam risu inepto res ineptior nulla est." Some taste as well as intelligence is needed by your social wit; and these witlings sometimes lacked it. But, for all that, to pride oneself as a wit, to have the ambition of being thought one, is better in itself than the common contentment with stupidity. These little coteries were provincial in their incessant striving for effect and in their choice of inappro-

priate subjects for their jests, no doubt. But they had their good ingredient.

Of strictly literary coteries we have very little sign among us. A generation in which ideas —at least for the moment—are languid and barren, and which therefore can produce but very few creative artists of the first or even the second rank, but which abounds in fairly competent mediocrities, and is, moreover, blessed with a myriad occasions for their appreciation —"literary columns" and what not—such a generation is likely to produce its little rings of criticism, its little business-like societies of mutual aid; but they are very innocuous. The more considerable men are apart from them; the bubbles of reputation they send up are often quite pretty to see, and they are generally free from malevolence. Provincial they are, of necessity, but in a sphere where little if any harm can be done and much innocent satisfaction afforded.

I thought it a mistake to confuse the provincial with the personal or individual, and I think it equally a mistake to confuse it with the national. If we can predicate a quality

of a whole nation, it seems to me a misuse of terms to call that quality provincial. It has been said of the English that they are as a nation, or as a race, intellectually coarse, impatient of ideas, prone boorishly to resent or to gibe at the unfamiliar, as certain English visitors are reported to have gibed at the dress of the Indian princes at the Delhi Durbar. Such a reproach, fixed upon a man or a group of men, might be the result of narrow associations and would then be provincial; but, if it be true of a whole race, the word is inapplicable in that connection. A mere question of words, perhaps; but it is best to keep to the line of thought on which one started. It seems to me, however, not inconsistent—and if it be, I must be content to risk it—to say of a national literature, if it be too narrowly national, that it is so far provincial; because a literature is the work of a certain limited number of writers, and these writers may fairly be called provincial if the result of their national associations be pushed to narrow or irrelevant extremes.

It may be said that the culture of Europe

generally is at this time less homogeneous, less inclined to mutual inspiration, than it was a century and a half ago, or even later. That may be so. Unfortunately, it is to be said with greater confidence that our own literature at this present day neither gives nor takes as once it gave and took. Through the greater part of the eighteenth century London and Paris exchanged ideas intimately and with freedom. The fact is a commonplace of literary history. Sterne and Richardson on the one shore, Rousseau and Diderot on the other, are the simplest cases of this cosmopolitan interest, and it is to be observed that in these the Englishmen were the inspirers. Cultivated men of fashion—to be cultivated was then a distinction, not an opprobrium, in English general society, and how distant it seems!—Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, George Selwyn, frequented Parisian philosophers and littérateurs; Montesquieu spent two years in England; Voltaire visited Congreve. Which of our contemporary dramatists would be so honoured? We bowdlerise a few French plays, and these not the best; we translate some of the more

popular French novels; we translate Tolstoy, Annunzio, a stray German or so. But what are we giving back? Where are we leading, influencing European thought? To what extent—it is asked merely for information—are we even listened to? So far as our contemporary literature is concerned, we seem to be moving outside the thought of Europe, outside its social interests, theories, problems, emotions, ideas.

This is not to condemn ourselves off-hand—a vice which alternates with our self-complacency. Much of our literature concerns social conditions, humours, or eccentricities which are distinctively and essentially English and incommunicable to the foreigner. We may say cheerfully that it is his loss. But it is hardly a matter for congratulation that our contemporary literature should reflect so little of the general human movement—in addition to what it may produce justly for ourselves alone—so little of the ideas and fancies which the thoughtful and cultivated among us share more or less with those of other lands. It is a matter for reflection that, so far, our literature

should now be provincial, which in the eighteenth century, *pace* Matthew Arnold, it most assuredly was not.

One reason, among others, for the fact may be found in a quality which is become national, but was in its origin essentially provincial. The first Puritans were zealous rather for doctrine than for ethics; but what is rightly called the Puritan spirit, in affairs where questions of morality can be discussed, dates from them, from a set of people alien to the general English of their time, and has gradually imposed itself—as strength of conviction and keenness of interest, met by indifference only, will ultimately do—on us all as a nation. We may call this spirit historically provincial, at least. In practical morality it may be good or otherwise. But in matters intellectual and artistic its effect is an obsession of formal and specialised morality, and of hair-splitting issues concerning this specialised morality. It is not, as it is commonly stated, that we refuse to discuss certain things; it is that we refuse to discuss anything else. It is something far more formidable than mere prudery, far more insidious, far

less easily thrown off. We must bring everything down to its level. All of the human heart and the human mind which does not concern these questions of narrowly moral right and wrong in one field only of morality is for us secondary, slightingly entertained, apt to be ignored altogether. The prudes and their irritated opponents are at one in this. They approach the matter with different opinions, but they are all intent on it, all obsessed by it. "Art for Art's sake," that old phrase, represented literally an impossible idea; morality cannot be banished from art. But morality is more even than questions of sex, much more than the transitory customs of this or that society which regulate questions of sex. If our contemporary literature is to cease to be exposed to the charge of provinciality, this note of provinciality at least it must lose.

I leave my subject incomplete, having promised nothing better. Even on the broad lines I proposed I have left many modes of provinciality untouched, it is very probable; and anyone who should inquire a little more curiously than I will find a thousand more notes of

provinciality leap to his mind. If I have in any way been suggestive to him I am content. It is pleasant to have done with fault-finding. Looking back through these pages I am almost shocked to find a demerit alleged against Thackeray, who has made me a whole world of friends, or against Matthew Arnold, but for whose teaching it is likely this article would never have been written. I observe the phrase "academic provinciality," and remember shamefully a university where so many dreams of youth lie graciously buried. . . . It is pleasant to be done with fault-finding.

III

"DON JUAN"[1]

ALL who are lovers and students of Byron waited in some anxiety for the volume in Mr. Murray's final edition of his poetry which should contain *Don Juan*. It has not been with the poetry as with the letters. In their case it was known that many letters in the possession of Mr. Murray and others had not been printed, and that many others had been discreetly mutilated. We looked, therefore, to receive a mass of new material, and in the event we have been enriched by over four hundred new letters and

[1] This was written when Mr. Murray published the sixth volume of his new and probably final edition of Byron's poetry. In a previous book of essays I have reprinted two on the new edition of Byron's letters, and in this case also I think the particular occasion of importance enough to justify me in retaining my criticism of the edition, as distinct from the poems. I make this remark because I hold that to reprint one's ordinary reviews would be rather intolerable. In the case of Sterne and that of Fielding I have reprinted (from matter written for specific occasions) merely what concerned my appreciation, such as it may be, of the authors themselves.

many additions to the old. But in the case of the poetry previous editions had included so much that was slight and merely topical, pieces bubbling out in his letters from sheer good spirits—"My dear Mr. Murray, you're in a damn'd hurry," and the like—that little could be expected to remain behind. *Don Juan,* however, was so intimately and minutely personal that we might well hope (fortified, too, by certain indignant passages in the letters) that original stanzas, fearfully censored by Murray and Hobhouse and Thomas Moore, might now appear for our delight. Moreover, *Don Juan* was unfinished, and Trelawny had talked of stanzas for a seventeenth canto found in Byron's room at Missolonghi. Well, the final *Don Juan* has appeared, and we, the lovers and students aforesaid, have to confess that as regards fresh material we are on the whole disappointed.

First, we have the stanzas referred to by Trelawny—fourteen, not fifteen, as he said. (Hobhouse took possession of the MS., and it now belongs to Lady Dorchester.) They are not, on their merits, worth much; they are

Byron at his laziest, when he was least "in his stride," and belong to one of the occasions, inevitable in a poem of the nature and length of *Don Juan*, when he was content, as it were, to mark time. I do not for a moment believe that he would have published them as they stand. All one can say of them is that Mr. Coleridge would have had no right to keep them from us, and that Byron can afford their exposure. Secondly, there are some stanzas on Brougham, which should have followed stanza 189 in the first canto, apropos of the suit between Donna Inez and her spouse—

> "'Twas a fine cause for those in law delighting—
> 'Tis pity that they had no Brougham in Spain," etc.,

but which were omitted for the same reason as those (originally) on Castlereagh, namely, that Byron was not in England to meet him; they are now printed in a note. These are good Byron—vehement, scornful, bitterly allusive.

> "Thersites of the House, Parolles of Law,
> The double Bobadill takes Scorn for Awe"

—that, for example, is in the true Byron vein. But even these stanzas have not the sense and

humour of the more cherished passages—and they are only seven. Lastly, there is a stanza in a note which was rejected from the third canto; it is unimportant. So far, then, as the fresh verses go we are disappointed. Perhaps it was unreasonable to hope.

There is a new and very curious interest in the notes made by Hobhouse and others, and by Byron in answer to them, on the MS. of the first two cantos. These two cantos, it will be remembered, caused great dismay in Murray's parlour when first they came from Venice, and a junta of the poet's friends sate solemnly upon them to consider if they really could be published. Byron was curiously patient, and his letters of the time are full of answers to their fears and objections. These fears and objections are reflected on the MS., and one cannot wonder that the poet complained, after Tony Lumpkin, that he should be "snubbed so when I am in spirits." "You certainly will be damned for all this scene," wrote Hobhouse of the "ne'er consent, consented" passage. "Carissimo," he says of the bedroom scene, "carissimo, do review the whole scene, and

think what you would say of it if written by another." "Don't swear again — the third 'damn.'" Collation with the MSS. reveals, by the way, that Byron pretty constantly remembered this admonition—he denied himself innumerable "damns." This, however, we knew before, since the *varia* have been given in previous editions.

So much for fresh matter; I pass to the editing. In the way of explanatory notes Mr. Coleridge had little to do. Byron annotated himself freely, and his previous editors have been assiduous. Mr. Coleridge has identified the guests at Lord Henry's country place in Canto XIII., some with certainty, some a little dubiously. That is an interesting piece of work; but it may be noted in the connection that at this time of day Mr. Coleridge need not have refrained from telling the world that "Lady Pinchbeck" in Canto XII. was Lady Blessington, or, if he doubted it, from guessing at someone else. He has a long and extremely interesting note on Newstead, based on a very careful study of the place; from which study he concludes that Byron's description in Canto

XIII. "unites the charm of a picture with the accuracy of a ground plan." Notes other than explanatory or verifying he has not attempted, and wisely, for lovers of Byron prefer to make their own opinions of the text; an illuminative flash on it from a poet of Mr. Swinburne's or Mr. Henley's parts were very well, but the time is gone for minute editorial appraisement. In his introduction, Mr. Coleridge puts forward a view of the conception of *Don Juan*, which is attractive. He declines to believe that Byron stated the whole truth when he wrote to Murray, "You ask me for the plan of Donny Johnny; I *have* no plan—I *had* no plan. . . . You are too earnest and eager about a work never intended to be serious. Do you suppose that I could have any intention but to giggle and make giggle?—a playful satire, with as little poetry as could be helped, was what I meant." "Great works," says Mr. Coleridge, "in which the poet speaks *ex animo*, and the man lays bare the very pulse of the machine, are not conceived or composed unconsciously and at haphazard." He thinks that Byron, stung thereto by some remarks in Coleridge's *Critique*

on Bertram, deliberately determined "to conceive and to depict an ideal character, gifted, gracious, and delightful, who should carry into all its practical consequences the doctrine of a mundane if not godless nature"—the phrase refers to the Critique—"and, at the same time, retain the charities and virtues of uncelestial but not devilish manhood . . . the argument is a vindication of the natural man. It is Byron's 'criticism of life.'" The last sentence is no doubt true, with the proviso (too often forgotten by critics) that a writer does not express his whole criticism of life all at once. But with Mr. Coleridge's theory of the conception of the poem I cannot agree. Great works are sometimes conceived at haphazard, though perhaps none has been so composed throughout. Byron was steeped in Pulci and Berni; he had found the *ottava rima* perfectly fitted to his genius and (as it is) to the genius of English humour; he had made a brilliant success of *Beppo;* he determined on something in the same vein, and very likely Coleridge's critique did suggest the name of his hero. Then, as the work grew under his hand, and as the

personal and introspective nature of his genius impelled him irresistibly to put more and more of himself, his own mind and heart, into it, he may have conceived some such "vindication of the natural man" as Mr. Coleridge supposes. But that he did so in the first instance one can hardly believe, remembering his letters at the time, and remembering also that more than once he half decided to stop. Had his purpose been so complete and single as Mr. Coleridge thinks, he would hardly have spent hundreds of stanzas over shipwrecks and slave-markets and harems—he, the most militant and direct of English writers. But the theory is attractive.

We miss from this edition those extracts from the contemporary reviews of *Don Juan* which were a joy in the edition of 1837. Mr. Coleridge gives the references, but life is too short for burrowing in the files of "*Maga*" and the *Edinburgh*, to say nothing of extinct publications less easy of access. It is true the volume runs already to six hundred pages, but just a few more, devoted to those extracts, would have enabled the reader to contrast the

estimation of the poem then and now. It may be permitted briefly to recur to them for the purpose. There are two notes in nearly all these reviews, one of bellowing indignation at what was (in truth) its coarseness, and at what was asserted to be its immorality, and one of hearty and entire recognition of the genius and skill of the author—that he was Byron was a *secret de Polichinelle* even of the first two cantos. "My Grandmother's Review, the British" was of opinion that no passages "can be produced without insult to the ear of decency, and vexation to the heart that feels for domestic or national happiness"; *Blackwood* thought it contained "a more thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice—power and profligacy—than any poem which had ever before been written in the English or, indeed, in any other modern language . . . a cool, unconcerned fiend, laughing with detestable glee," etc., though Wilson was to make handsome amends to Byron after his death. Jeffrey was exceedingly eloquent: "*This* is the charge which *we* bring against Lord Byron. We say that . . . all the powers of his power-

ful mind . . . all ennobling pursuits, and disinterested virtues, are mere deceits and illusions . . . love, patriotism, valour, devotion, constancy, ambition—all are to be laughed at, disbelieved in, and despised!" and much more to the same random effect; and the Rev. John Styles, D.D., exhorted his congregation: "Be assured, my brethren, it is with sorrowful reluctance I feel myself called upon to denounce the greatest genius of the age as the greatest enemy of his species." (The Rev. John Styles, by the way, drew freely from the article in *Blackwood*.) I cannot linger over these extracts, but it is refreshing to turn to the article in *John Bull*, by far the best, as Byron admitted, of all the deliveries on the subject, in spite of its flippancy:—

"I consider *Don Juan* as out of all sight the best of your works; it is by far the most spirited, the most straightforward, the most interesting, and the most poetical; and everybody thinks as I do of it, although they have not the heart to say so. Old Gifford's brow relaxed as he gloated over it; Mr. Croker chuckled; Dr. Whitaker smirked; Mr. Milman sighed; Mr. Coleridge took it to his bed with him."

Well, times are changed, and the very mutable fashion of critics. The immorality and indecency of *Don Juan* no longer trouble us. It is recognised not to be a book for the schoolroom, possibly (the point is too delicate for argument here) not to be a book for the drawing-room. But in male society, especially of public school and University breeding, save when the very senior or the reverend are present, conversation among Englishmen was and is plain-spoken; and *Don Juan*, written in the spirit of male conversation by a man who, for all his exploits, cared little or nothing for the opinion of women, is no longer a theme of horror. But Byron, who laughed at the charges of immorality—"it will be nuts to them all," said he—would have liked far less the latter-day depreciation which questions his powers. A reaction there has been, no doubt, in his favour; but still in places where they discuss literature you may hear him languidly belittled. One thing is certain—by *Don Juan* Byron stands or falls. The sentimental verse of his earlier time—his boyhood we should think it now—owed its stupendous vogue

largely to accident, to the romantic movement of the times, the reaction against the common-sense and wit of the eighteenth century. It was not until his later work, *The Vision of Judgment, Beppo,* and, finally, *Don Juan,* that the real Byron stands out. He knew it; his earlier poems (he wrote to Shelley) were "exaggerated nonsense which has corrupted the public taste," and he himself was the stanchest champion of Pope. But, putting aside the mock Byron of legend, the melancholy posing creature, and coming to the real Byron of *Don Juan*, we find there are a number of excellent people to whom he is wholly antipathetic. Critics of letters, it may be said without offence, are in the main a sedentary folk, and therefore a little timid of life and perhaps a little anæmic of heart; and to them Byron's jolly humour and abounding vitality and zest for emotions and broad masculine intelligence are an offence. Naturally they criticise this work of his, open as it is to criticism, with acidity. They take passages of broad fun and complain that they are not ecstatic poetry; they take him in his pedestrian moments, and say he is common-

place, and so on. It is an offence to many that with him—as with all the ancient and most of the modern writers outside England—love is based on physical passion and not on community of ideas or social convenience or the like. I might explain the objections for ever. Meanwhile the impartial man of judgment perceives that in this great and extraordinarily sustained work there is more perception, more understanding, more imagination, more humour, and, finally, more excellent play of language than would furnish out a whole *corpus* of merely accomplished artists, the critic's favourites. A comic epic—a picaresque novel in verse—call it what you will, it is a whole vigorous world in itself.

IV

A NOTE ON FIELDING

FOR one who has read Fielding, even *Tom Jones* alone, probably half a dozen have a general idea of his life, and deriving it from Thackeray have a false idea. Thackeray's picture of Fielding gives furiously to puzzle. It is not explained by saying that Thackeray was a sentimentalist. Sentimentalist Thackeray was, no doubt, but here we should expect his sentimentalism to carry him too far in defence of Fielding's character, not in the other direction. His judgment (we should have thought) must have at once suggested the *a priori* improbability of the stories to Fielding's discredit, and his knowledge—and Thackeray's reading in the period was wide enough—should have told him that there was next to no evidence for them. It was natural

enough for him to be unfair to George IV., the cock-shy of the Whigs ever since he threw them over, or even to Swift, the implicit enemy by anticipation to the ineffectual sentiment of the Liberalism Thackeray professed. But Fielding (the writer) was one of his idols, one to whom his own novels in theme and method owed an enormous debt. And as for effect, an indignant refutation would have had a more striking effect than that which he actually achieved. One has to say that he was lazy in valuing evidence. But a fancy which occurs to one who loves Thackeray well may be worth mentioning. It is that, thorough man of the world as he was, he knew, better than the average Englishman knows, that a certain amount of free drinking and loose living is quite compatible with profound thought and even with hard toil, and that while his audience were sighing over "poor Fielding," he in his heart was thinking of their narrow view and superficial inferences. The stories need trouble us no more. Some of them—like his supping off "a ham bone"—merely reflect on his poverty, a natural discredit to the coarse and

unimaginative of a materially successful race, but not one to the thoughtful. Others, or the same, refer to his keeping low company, as, of course, he must have done at times, even as Dickens must, or he could not have written about it so well. It is odd, by the way, that these stories were so eagerly taken up by the aristocratic patrons of literature, and that they so hated Fielding, a gentleman by birth and an aristocrat in temperament, and so belauded Richardson, who was neither; perhaps not odd, since the contrast has often happened—your patron likes to patronise—but notable at least. The real gravamen of the charges against Fielding is that he was a persistent drunkard; and that is rendered absurd by his work as a public servant and a writer. An occasional bout need not signify, but Fielding's novels written by a persistent drunkard!—the idea is simply stupid. There is a parallel here with Byron, whose work is a triumphant refutation of the amiable theory of his contemporaries that he was a worn-out debauchee. But it is the frequent fate of a great Englishman. When once his name is established as

familiar to the public ear few care to know what he did to make it, very few (if he was a writer) to read what he wrote; the question is, Was he faithful to his wife and did he pay the tailor? The genius of the race for conduct, as Matthew Arnold politely put it. And, of course, it is dull to hear that the great man's morality was much like that of other men.

The mention of Byron suggests a comparison in work as well as in libels. Most comparisons are futile, but perhaps it is less unprofitable to compare two men who had much in common, as Fielding and Byron, than two who had nothing in common, like Fielding and Richardson. To Byron, as to Fielding, there belonged a pre-eminently masculine intelligence—it is an expression that might take many pages adequately to analyse, but which is clear to experience—an intelligence which is true to itself, which goes, not only far, but thoroughly, which may use a prejudice to suggest, but not to dictate. This of the later Byron, of course. But it is of the later Fielding, too, that one thinks—not the Fielding of the plays, or the Byron of the senti-

mental lyrics. Here, again, is a parallel; fashion and ambition of fame set Byron writing his "exaggerated nonsense," fashion and the need of bread set Fielding writing plays; life and genius sent Fielding to his novels, Byron to "Don Juan." There was more attraction in romance for Byron than for Fielding, but to both it was the romance of earthly circumstance, not the romance of vague imaginings, which appealed. Byron had a greater love of beauty for its own sake; but in both it was the stress and pull of life, not the contemplation of beauty, which was a mastering force. Both could dwell without an effort—though it lay, of course, far more in Fielding's way to do so—on the sordid and the mean, because they are part of life, and both took life as a whole. And—but the comparison will break if I continue it, as the way is with comparisons, and my concern is with Fielding.

Save to the very curious or the very thorough, Fielding's plays are now unreadable, as unreadable as the modern "Society novel," which in their catalogue of uninteresting intrigues they rather resemble. That the plays

are so dull to read is not accounted for by their lacking, as certainly they lacked, the gift of the theatre. Other plays have lacked it and so been poor things to act, but are readable still for their wit or style. But Fielding was not only attempting an art for which his genius was unfitted in general, but a small and conventionally narrowed section of that art—the formal comedy of fashion. The observer and philosopher of free, robust, and vigorous life, and low life for choice, is inimitable; the manipulator of rigidly artificial life, where wit is the one thing needful, has been beaten out of the field by many inferior men. In truth this observer and philosopher was not a great wit; and the result is that if you except the burlesques, where a high-spirited young man's fun had play, his *théâtre* is nothing. He himself thought that he should have started play-writing at the age when he gave it up (impelled by Walpole's creation of that remarkable institution, the dramatic censorship); and if he meant that he might then have broken through a convention which as a younger man he inevitably followed, no doubt

he was right. Mr. Henley, in the intensely human, brilliant, and minutely informed essay on Fielding, which he wrote for a recent edition, compares him with Vanbrugh, but breaks off, in mercy as it were to his subject, and, transferring the comparison to the novels, puts Squire Western against Sir John Brute in *The Provok'd Wife*. It is a most interesting suggestion. In the thought and genius of the two creations there is no comparison at all; yet because Vanbrugh had a measure of the comic spirit (coarsely dressed, if you will) given to few dramatists, he gets such an effect out of an ordinary "situation" of intrigue (when Sir John discovers his wife's lover and muses drunkenly on the grievance that he should have to fight a duel in addition to the wrong done him) that in terms of his own art his protagonist can be put against one of the greatest inventions of the greater man. The lesson is that the greatest artist must pursue the art for which he is fitted and not another.

It was a lucky accident, indeed, that the surprising *Pamela* so struck the humour and ire of Fielding that he started on a

burlesque of it and drifted into his proper calling. There is nothing new to be said of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* and *Amelia*. They may be left as they stand in the universal judgment of those who can savour life and letters. Englishmen can hardly regret that Fielding's works are so characteristically and intensely English that, except as a curiosity, they have been little studied in other lands; for it means that they have in detail a vivid panorama of English life in the eighteenth century as it was seen, closely and minutely, by an unfaltering eye and an understanding mind. Nor do we now regret their "coarseness," as was once the fashion, since that is, again, a necessity of the faithful treatment of the subject; the coarseness was in the material, never in the mind of the artist, as it was (for example) in Smollett's. True it is that there are sensitive souls who can contemplate the beautiful only, and Fielding's work (save in intellectual play and handling of our language) is not beautiful; happier they who can enjoy both kinds of art. The quality in Fielding's mind which inspired his method

of using his splendid gift of sight was irony, and this quality may have kept others from a right enjoyment of him. For we pride ourselves on disliking a "pose," and irony is an obvious pose, and, more, a wilful pose. Irony runs through all Fielding's novels, and reaches a great climax in *Jonathan Wild*, which is probably the least popular (the plays apart) of his works. In point of pure art, of perfect achievement of an artistic purpose, it is perhaps the greatest of them. Much has been written of it, but perhaps full justice has never yet been done it. It is a more perfect sustainment of irony than is to be found even in Swift, who will half abandon it for sarcasm and wholly abandon it for direct invective. But irony is never popular — *Gulliver's Travels* are read as a fairy tale!—as any modern who has tried to write in its terms knows very well; few will care to read it, and half of them will take it for simple statement.

V

THE MURDER OF MOUNTFORD, THE PLAYER

AMONG the State trials most shrewdly selected and admirably edited by Mr. H. L. (now Judge) Stephen, there does not appear the trial by his peers of Lord Mohun for the murder of Mr. Mountford. It does not, indeed, deserve to be called a famous trial: it raised no important point of law, affected no leading interest, and, inasmuch as the accused was acquitted, it had no particular result. Naturally, therefore, with so many other cases leaping to his eye, Mr. Stephen omitted it. It is possible, too, that if the social significance of its details and the literary interest (through Thackeray) of Mohun himself made Mr. Stephen pause before rejection, he concluded that on the whole it had been sufficiently exploited. That, it is obvious, is not my view. Lord Mohun, it is

true, has come down to us as the typical profligate and debauchee of his age—a reputation which is severe rather on the age than on Lord Mohun—and Thackeray was familiar with this incident in his career. He does not, however, describe it anywhere at length, but merely alludes to it in *Esmond*, and mentions it elsewhere as one of Mohun's villainous escapades. I think it deserves a lengthier treatment. In its essence it was but a commonplace and brutal murder: poor Mr. Mountford was stabbed by Captain Hill before he could put himself on guard, and the motive was only the stupid jealousy of a stupid and brutal man. But as the story is unfolded we cannot help seeing, if we have any imagination at all, part of the life of those days start for a moment into being again—the dissipated aristocrat, his blackguardly boon companion, the easy-going, harmless player-folk, the night-watchmen and constables. We see them as they lived, with here a detail and there a detail marking the difference and distance of their times and ours. Their Bohemia lives again authentic, as it was two hundred years ago.

Some of us think such revelations worth attention.

I propose to relate the events simply, in the order of their happening. But first we may as well consider briefly the three chief actors in them. These are Lord Mohun, his friend Mr. Richard Hill (the murderer), and the bewitching Mrs. Bracegirdle; for poor Mr. Mountford, who was murdered, was rather a lay-figure in the affair.

Lord Mohun was seventeen years old at the time, that is to say, in the fourth year of William and Mary, and already a proficient in the vices of the town. His age need not surprise us. For good and evil, the age of active manhood began in those days almost as soon as a man was a man. When it was possible a hundred years later to be an eminent statesman in the early twenties, there is nothing wonderful about a debauchee in his teens. But if we had to pass a moral judgment upon him, his youth might plead that mere boyish delight in an "affair," and boyish hero-worship of the ruffianly principal in it, led him wrong more than did a depraved love of wickedness

for its own sake. His father had been killed in a duel while he was a child, and he had been ill brought up. "Poor fellow!" let us say, by all means. Probably the picture Thackeray drew of him (as he was a few years after this date) in *Esmond* is a pretty fair one. Probably "he was a devil," as someone says of a character meant for Rochester in one of Etherege's plays, "with something of the angel yet undefaced in him," at seventeen. He seems to have had some charm of manner, and the story we are concerned with shows a sort of generosity in his mind.

Nothing such can be said of Captain Dick Hill. A vulgar ruffian and bully, if ever there was one, and we need not waste qualifying words over him. But let us not suppose the type extinct. It is seldom indeed found consorting with gentlemen nowadays—though we can hardly say it never is—and a difference more important for the rest of the community is that it has lost its sword. But in the shadier parts of a racecourse crowd, in some public bars and elsewhere, Dick Hills flourish yet, more or less, swaggering, shouting, picking quarrels, muttering revenges.

Let us turn quickly to Mrs. Bracegirdle. Her powers as an actress and her witchery as a woman are one of the traditions—vaguely glorious, pathetically intangible—of the stage. For me, as a lover of it, and especially as a lover of the comedies in which she played, her name has a wonderful fascination, and I would rather have seen her play Millamant than Mrs. Siddons play Lady Macbeth. She is said to have been as virtuous as she was beautiful, in spite of a whisper about the great Mr. Congreve, and we may as well believe it as not. And now to the story.

Captain Dick Hill fell in love with Mrs. Bracegirdle, and wished to marry her, but Mrs. Bracegirdle would have nothing to do with Captain Dick Hill. Unable to understand any objection to himself, and disregarding the actress's character for virtue, he decided that she "loved another," and fixed on Mr. Mountford, though Mr. Mountford was a married man, as his rival. His suspicions were based solely on the fact that Mountford was a player in the same company, but he vowed publicly that he would have Mountford's

blood. Rejected by Mrs. Bracegirdle, he approached Mrs. Knight, a sister comedian, and implored her good offices. But Mrs. Knight refused, alleging that she did not wish to make enemies in the house. Hill at once thought of Mountford, of course, and announced with an oath that he would "find a way to deal with him speedily."

Then Hill made up his mind to sterner measures, and determined to abduct Mrs. Bracegirdle and marry her by force. A confederate was necessary, and he pitched on Lord Mohun, over whom he evidently possessed a great influence, and to whom, it is probable, he had been an admired tutor in dissipation. Lord Mohun was delighted to assist his friend and mentor. The affair was exciting, and seemed likely to involve a fight, since Hill was assured that Mountford would interfere. Not that Lord Mohun was hostile to Mountford: on the contrary, he had made advances of friendship to him, being an admirer of his acting, but Hill's claims came first. So on Friday, December 9th, my Lord Mohun being just returned to town from a duel at Kensington, the two commenced operations.

They set to work methodically. First they agreed with William Dixon, who let out coaches, to take them up at the theatre that evening and drive them to Totteridge, near Barnet—at the reasonable rate of thirty shillings. Then they hired a gang of soldiers (actually soldiers!) to assist them, and, these preliminaries accomplished, went to dine at the "Three Tuns" in Shandois Street. There they somewhat imprudently talked over their plans, Hill as usual denouncing Mr. Mountford; but, mindful of business, Hill took an opportunity of borrowing a case of pistols. And so to the theatre.

A disappointment awaited them. Mrs. Bracegirdle was not playing that day, but was to sup, they learned, with Mr. Page in Princes Street, out of Drury Lane. So they left the theatre, after the worthy Captain had threatened characteristically to split the nose of anyone who should ask payment of him. At nine o'clock they moved Dixon and his coach from the Horseshoe Tavern lower down the Lane to Lord Clare's house, and there also the defenders of their country whom Hill had hired

were smoking and drinking. But there was no sign of Mrs. Bracegirdle, and fearing a mistake the party moved to Norfolk Street, where now is the office of Mr. Stead, but where then lived, or hard by, both the Bracegirdle and Mr. Mountford. The Captain, believing his adversary to be at home (he listened outside the door and thought he heard voices), was for going in and thrashing Mountford, but in the end they went back to the Lane and waited. At this point the party was diminished by Dixon, who took exception, not to the nature of the enterprise but to the lateness of the hour, and went home to bed, leaving a postilion in his place.

But now—at something past ten—the drama began. Mrs. Bracegirdle, accompanied by Mr. Page and (you will be pleased to hear) chaperoned by her mother, came into the Lane from Princes Street, the three walking hand in hand, as the custom was.

Mohun was sitting inside the coach, and Hill standing outside, and as the others came up he gave the signal to his men. Followed a sharp scuffle. The soldiers separated Page

from Mrs. Bracegirdle and pushed her towards the coach, while Hill, that warrior, attacked the unlucky Page, who had no weapon but a walking-cane, with his sword. Cries, curses, and shouts for aid! Mrs. Bracegirdle's mother clung desperately to her daughter, and, so doing, really defeated the plot, for the neighbours hurried up before the soldiers could hustle Mrs. Bracegirdle into the coach. Hill, recognising facts with the quickness of a tactician, called his men off and dismissed them, and offered his agreeable assistance to Mr. Page in seeing the ladies home. Lord Mohun, who seems to have thought that there were men enough to deal with one unarmed man and two women without him, got out of the coach and joined the party.

So the first act ended in farce. Mrs. Bracegirdle and her mother were allowed to go into their lodging; and there also poor Mr. Page, after being brutally threatened by Hill, took refuge. Hill and his noble friend stood outside in the street, Hill with a naked sword, having lost the scabbard in the scrimmage; and to them presently Mrs. Bracegirdle's land-

lady, Mrs. Browne, who had heard of the outrage from her lodger, and who came to exercise her right of criticism as a free Englishwoman, peer or no peer. She received a polite but rather confused apology from Mohun, who in fact claimed to have saved Mrs. Bracegirdle's life. "Had it not been for me the rabble would have torn her a-pieces." He added that his friend the Captain's intentions were honourable.

The Captain meanwhile had begun to harp again on Mountford, though, as we have seen, he had no share in defeating the plot; and Mrs. Browne, hearing Mr. Mountford's name, cried out: "Why, what hurt hath Mr. Mountford done you?"

"I have been abused," growled he, "and I will be revenged."

Mrs. Browne was justly alarmed, and hurried in to Mrs. Bracegirdle, who sent her mother and her maid round to Mrs. Mountford to beg her send her husband warning.

Mrs. Bracegirdle's lodging was in Howard Street, out of Norfolk Street, and Mountford must pass the corner of it to reach his house

in Norfolk Street itself. Hill and Mohun, therefore, had merely to stay where they were to make sure of getting him. And so they stayed, drinking a bottle of wine they had fetched from the "White Horse"; and there Mrs. Page, seeking her husband at Mrs. Bracegirdle's, found them drinking toasts to the Bracegirdle and to Mrs. Barry, another name well known to stage history. The neighbourhood was alive by now, and expectant heads peered out of the windows.

A scene horrid enough they were soon to see. But first farce demanded a further toll, and the watch came round the corner from Surrey Street, headed by a man with a lantern.

"Who comes here?" cried the lantern-bearer, as he saw the drawn swords.

"A friend," quoth Mohun.

"Return your swords and stand off."

"I am a peer of the land. Here, will you have my sword?"

Dogberry was overawed at once. "God bless your honour, my lord, but I hope you are doing no harm?"

"We are only drinking a bottle of wine,"

said Mohun; but Hill was not for politeness with a watchman, and asked him to knock him down if he pleased. Then up came the constable, a portly man and out of breath, and on him too the presence of a peer worked like magic. Mohun asked him to drink a glass of wine, and in the end the constable, assured further by some women that the gentlemen had only been serenading them, went off with his men.

Scarcely had they gone when the doomed Mountford appeared. As he passed the corner of Howard Street on his way home the disturbance attracted his notice, and he turned into Howard Street to see what it was. Good Mrs. Browne ran up to warn him of his danger, but he pushed past her, and went on to where Lord Mohun was standing.

"Mr. Mountford," said Mohun, "your humble servant: I am very glad to see you."

Mountford did not at first recognise him: you remember the darkness at night of London in those days. When he did, "What makes your lordship here at this time o' night?" he asked.

"I suppose, Mr. Mountford, you were sent for?"

"Sent for? For what?"

"I have a great respect for you, Mr. Mountford," said Lord Mohun, "and would fain have no difference between us, but there is a thing fallen out between Mrs. Bracegirdle and Mr. Hill."

Mountford disclaimed any concern with Mrs. Bracegirdle. "I know nothing of the matter. I came here by accident. But I hope your lordship will not vindicate such an ill man as Mr. Hill in such a matter as this. Pray let me desire your lordship to forbear."

Then Hill interrupted. "Pray, my lord, hold your tongue," he said; "this is not a convenient place to discuss this business," and struck Mountford a box on the ear, and bade him draw.

"Damme," cried he, "what's that for?" He seized his sword, but before he could draw Hill ran him through. He reeled back, and his sword fell clattering on the stones and broke.

Hill had done his work, and fled towards Surrey Street into the darkness. Mountford,

muttering that he was a dead man, staggered to his house, and met Mrs. Page, who was with his wife, on the doorstep; he threw his arms round her neck to support himself, saying that Hill had murdered him. She left him to his wife, and rushed into Howard Street, now ringing with cries of murder. Lord Mohun had not run away, like his friend; he waited the watch, and gave the constable his sword, remarking that he was innocent. He appealed to Mrs. Page: "I bid you take notice, madam, I had no hand in this murder, for my sword was not drawn." But Mrs. Page answered sensibly that she had seen him in Hill's company with his naked sword just before, and told the watch to take him to the Round House.

So to the Round House Lord Mohun was taken. On the way they went to Hill's lodgings, and found his sword with the blood on it, but Hill himself had escaped. Then Lord Mohun showed a touch of generosity, which is at least a feeble ray of light in this black business. He said that he only wished Hill had taken his money, and "I do not care a farthing if I am hanged for him."

Hanged he was not to be, though Mount-

ford died on the following morning. At his trial by his peers in Westminster Hall, six weeks later, fourteen of them voted him guilty, but sixty-nine for his acquittal. There is this to be said for their view, that possibly he might not have foreseen that Hill would give Mountford no chance of self-defence. Only possibly, however, for the scoundrel's character was known to him; and we may assume that his youth and his peerage (it was two centuries ago) saved him. They found that he was in the position of one who is by accident present at a crime, not an accessory. Neither as a moralist does the result please me, nor as a Tory; for when Mohun at length was killed he caused the death of the hopes of the Tories at the end of Anne's reign — the Duke of Hamilton. But that duel and murder are too famous for a fresh relation. Nor is it agreeable to know that Hill got clear away, and lived to die in a duel, and not to be hanged as he merited. Poor Mountford, the player, was not avenged.

So they fade away into darkness again, with just one faint glimmering light left, where is the memory of the Bracegirdle.

VI

STERNE AND HIS CRITICS

IT is a hard treatment of Sterne that he, who sought above all things to amuse, to "open the heart and lungs," as he said, has almost always been criticised with a heavy scowl. He was indecent, no doubt. But he had a genius of humour, and it is hard that the critics should have occupied themselves so much less with his genius than with his indecency. Some of them, indeed, seem really to think his indecency the more important fact. That is surely perverse. Anyone can be indecent; before the advent of Mr. Mudie innumerable writers have been so. That Sterne should have been one of them may be regretted. But comparatively few writers, before or since Mr. Mudie, have had genius, and that Sterne was one of them is his inalienable glory. It will not be supposed

that I wish to make light of the charge against him. Remembering how rare, and how precious to humanity, is the gift of exciting intelligent and refreshing mirth, no one but must lament that another quality of Sterne's mind, given our present ideas as to what is and is not permissible for allusion, should take Tristram Shandy from the hands of very many who would otherwise relish him, and mingle with the enjoyment of many others an occasional disgust. But, after all, grown and educated men can surely read him without harm and with little inconvenience to their delicacy, and the unique gift of mirth and humane appreciation he brings to these surely outweighs his offences a thousandfold.

In connection with this matter there is a recent development of criticism which is interesting in itself and bears on the right understanding of Sterne. The old treatment of him was something as follows: "Here, Sterne! you've been saying improper things. Hold out your hand. . . . That will do, and here's a sugar-plum because you're a genius." The later method is to say "Sterne, come here!

You've been *hinting* at improper things. How dare you? Why can't you say them right out, like Rabelais? Then we should applaud you. As it is, take that!" The two critics of him I have read last, Mr. Charles Whibley in a brilliant introduction to an edition of *Tristram Shandy*, and Mr. J. H. Millar in his *Mid-eighteenth Century*, both adopt this later attitude. It belongs to the manly and robust school of criticism, which has done much good in correcting a certain foolish sort of prudery, but which, like other good things, may be occasionally pushed too far. Sterne, according to Mr. Whibley, "is not overtly immoral, alas! he is only too pure. He is always hankering after a licence he dare not enjoy. . . . Between Yorick and Rabelais lies the chasm impassable." Mr. Millar is down on the unlucky Yorick even more trenchantly, not to say ferociously. "When Sterne approaches the region where free speech is difficult, and genteel periphrasis impossible, it is with the wink and leer of the adolescent schoolboy," whom Mr. Millar would have flogged heartily, we are sure. "When he was

stealing so much from Rabelais, he might well have taken a lesson from the master's frank and honest attitude to life." So he might, though surely Mr. Millar does not deny that Sterne was ever frank and honest. But the broadness of Rabelais was not in Sterne's nature; and it was not, so to speak, his game. Mr. Whibley thinks that he set out to defy the conventions, and would have been as frank as Rabelais only he did not dare. That seems to me to be almost absurd. Sterne did not want to defy conventions; he used them for a certain effect. He would not have been frank if he could—in this particular. He makes an art of suggestiveness—an art of suggesting the improper ingeniously, unexpectedly. That is the truth of Sterne's pruriency, a deliberate intention to suggest and adumbrate. No doubt he deserves all the hard things Mr. Whibley and Mr. Millar say of him. But it is well to understand him; and to believe that he was fearfully and inadequately imitating Rabelais is to misunderstand. A perverted ingenuity, no doubt, but a deliberate. . . .

Then the critics—ah! those critics—say he

was a plagiarist. So he was. I think that Mr. Whibley, with the natural zeal of the scholar, is over-ingenious in detecting correspondences. Still, there they are. Sterne's show of curious erudition owed much to Burton, for example. But no man ever yet acquired a great reputation by means of such borrowing. Sterne sometimes cribbed an unimportant passage directly—one of those erudite displays which, to us at least, are the least readable part of him—and at other times reflected his reading very obviously. But he did not steal my Uncle Toby, nor Mr. Shandy, nor Mrs. Shandy, nor Trim; and if Dr. Slop was drawn from some obscure doctor of his acquaintance, as it was alleged, that obscure doctor has done indirectly more posthumous good than ever he could have done alive. When a writer, who is proved to have stolen—but the word is harsh—from another, has done work of himself incomparably greater than that he stole, then the theft may be a blemish on his character, but is a very unimportant fault in his art. And if Sterne borrowed, he also lent.

His sentiment has been harshly assailed.

Well, it is most often unequal to the humour. Le Fevre's death scene is no great thing. But it is neither false nor inappropriate; it shows my Uncle Toby's benevolence in action. So, in its way, does the much-derided anecdote of Uncle Toby's letting the fly escape. Sterne's genius was more at home with talk. The inimitable touch of Uncle Toby after the reading of Ernulphus's curses comes to mind: "I declare, quote my Uncle Toby, my heart would not let me curse the Devil himself with so much bitterness. . . . He is the father of curses, replied Dr. Slop. . . . So am not I, replied my uncle. But he is cursed and damned already, to all eternity, replied Dr. Slop. I am sorry for it, quoth my Uncle Toby." That is worth many Le Fevres and escaped flies, but these are not altogether out of place either. It is otherwise, perhaps, with some other examples of Sterne's sentiment, more often in the *Journey* than in *Tristram*. But we have this to remember. We are sternly taught to repress our feelings; writers of Sterne's time were taught to encourage them. Reticence is the mode of our day, effusiveness was that of his; it is possible that

our fashion, as well as his, tends to the extreme, and our criticism, therefore, as well. The incident of Maria, for an instance, is set out with considerable coxcombry; yet it is possible in itself and not unaffecting. The coxcombry was of the day; the bit of feeling there is in it need not be rejected by ours. We may smile at the tears of our ancestors which gushed so freely, but we need not be angry with them. Judged by their actions they were not less manly than we. And if Sterne's tears had little salt in them sometimes, that does not prove he was unfeeling, as the critics say, any more than we are proved so by our dry eyes.

Sterne's idea of writing was that it should be as conversation; and, however inapplicable to most kinds of writing that idea may be, it is certain that most of *Tristram Shandy* has on one the effect of delightful talk, of table talk, or smoking-room talk, as the case may be. By his ingenious communings with himself, by his invention of imaginary objectors, and so on, he accomplishes, even in his longest digressions from the narrative, the effect of spirited dia-

logue. When in another writer you would have a string of propositions, in Sterne there is repartee, quaint evasions, lively clinches. His merry trick of suddenly supposing that he speaks to a woman, imitated often since, of course, has sometimes an inimitable effect. He turns from one to another of an imaginary audience with appropriate phrase and comic tact. Of course, he has been solemnly reproved for doing so—but I will let the critics rest. All his disquisitions are delightful ready conversation, and if ever a writer justified a theory of writing Sterne has done so. When you come to the actual conversations, the dramatic dialogues, *Tristram Shandy* would furnish you comic scenes for a dozen plays. My Uncle Toby's harping on his hobby of fortifications, and his mistaking every remark of the philosophical Mr. Shandy which can be so mistaken for an illusion to it, are in the truest vein of light comedy, just as Mr. Shandy's choleric outbursts and affectionate atonements are comedy of a subtler cast. What scene in all our comic dramatists, even in Congreve, is more fulfilled of the comic spirit than the re-

ception of the news of Brother Bobby's death in the parlour and in the kitchen? Mrs. Shandy, with her good-tempered, acquiescent stupidity, is a splendid foil for a scene of character. Why did Sterne never write a play? Perhaps he could not think of some silly intrigue for a plot, and so his play, if he had written one, would have been a failure. And we do not need the dramatic form to visualise the scenes in *Tristram*.

Probably it is not his quips and cranks, nor his comic scenes, that his lovers remember best. What they think of when they remember *Tristram Shandy* is first one and then another whole living man or woman coming freshly into the mind. The comic scenes go to make up these characters, of course, but one remembers the characters as wholes because they are alive and, so far as we need look, imperishable. They are essentially of general human life; there is no difficulty in being intimate with them. They are whimsical, eccentric; but so are your friends and neighbours if you could see them with the eyes of Sterne. For all time Mr. Shandy struggles with his coat-tail pockets

to get at his handkerchief, and Mrs. Shandy listens at the keyhole, and Uncle Toby potters about his mimic fortifications, and Mrs. Wadman waits for him with her Bible open, and Trim harangues the servants on life and death, and Susannah lays her hand on his shoulder when he tells of the finest face that ever man looked at, and takes it off when he says it is but corruption, and—we might go on for ever. There is no analysing or cataloguing these people; they are too complete for the one process, too individual for the other. Even eulogy is impertinent. One forgets the critics and turns to the book.

VII

PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANITOMTITY

AMONG the books which are left to me from my youthful studies is Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*, in two large volumes. I smile at them sometimes when I observe them. They are very dusty. Ueberweg's two large volumes, mostly in small print, recording the opinions of innumerable philosophers, if I never read them, sometimes start in me a train of thought. What have the philosophers done for mankind? It is not necessarily an empty question, and is not to be answered by the quarrels about Dreyfus or the fact that in our own time, in the unhappy province of Macedonia, one sect of Christians urged the Turks to massacre another sect. The average of mankind is very much as it was, no doubt, and philosophy has done no more than

religion to remove its bigotries and cruelties. Even in the tiny minority which in any age has assimilated philosophy in its reason, conduct has seldom been affected. Given two men otherwise alike, Stoicism in the one, Epicureanism in the other, will come to much the same thing in action. Sometimes indeed the consciousness of philosophy may affect conduct unfavourably: a philosopher, said Horace Walpole, was "a supercilious brute." And Shakespeare, anticipating my platitudes as so many of better men, has made his remark about the philosopher and the toothache.

For all that, philosophers have influenced large affairs at times, even by their philosophy and not by some accidental (and generally disastrous) realisation of Plato's wish to have them kings. Rousseau and his like without doubt gave point to the crisis in economics which made the French Revolution. In England I think the complacent exponents of philosophical individualism were responsible to some extent for the slowness with which we realised the horrors of industrial individualism (when you come to philosophy you come to hideous words)

two generations since, and for the resistance to the remedies. I mean, of course, the horrible usage of women and children in factories. And here I come upon a thought which occurred to me the other day as having a possible significance. Philosophers may be irritable, but they have been in the main a comfortable folk; they have taken a calm view of human sorrows and distresses, and in their theories the most have leaned to optimism. Why? I will tell you. The world not wanting philosophy, the philosopher has generally written at his own expense. Therefore he has generally been a man either living with no necessity to work, or with work little enough to leave him time for philosophy. The same thing may be said, if it may be said without irreverence, of many theologians and writing divines, ascetic men, perhaps, but with their ascetic needs provided. A deal of calmness, a deal of optimism we find in comfortably provided men! A base thought, you think? But look you. If you or I, men toiling for scanty subsistence, were to write, for instance, a treatise on the evils of individualism, should we not be inclined to bitterness when

we think of the many people, some of them for certain drunken men and brainless women, whom that system gives enormous incomes to play with in return for nothing? But your philosopher is calm, sometimes tolerant, occasionally (when an eminent Socialist) flippant. I am not thinking of Pangloss and Candide; I do not say our toil upsets an optimistic theory; I only say that philosophers are generally in comfortable circumstances.

Let us double on the track. What have philosophers done for mankind? For the average very little at all. For the minority which has read them very little in conduct. But to this minority they have given a great deal of innocent pleasure. Your emotions in reading an exciting novel are mostly pleasurable, but partly painful. Suspense is painful, indignation is painful, you are eager that justice should be done or for the right discovery, and eagerness is of the painful (though slightly so), not the pleasant emotions. Poetry, fine poetry, brings tears to your eyes, it stirs the depths of melancholy memories. But if you can read philosophy, there is your pleasure unalloyed.

The philosopher shares with the clown the glory of bestowing an unqualified pleasure on mankind. And even the laughter the clown excites is apt to have its reaction. There is no such unqualified enjoyment as that of the pure intelligence. No matter the aim or the result. So that the process be consistent with itself and worthy of your intellect, your pleasure is complete. We read it too little in these days, save when a philosopher startles us, as did Mr. Myers, and that is not often. Probably if I myself had read more philosophy I should not have needed you to tell me that all these things have been said before.

I would say a word or two on humanitomtity, of which a passage above has reminded me. It was the word with which his friends mocked Nevill Beauchamp's "humanity." Mr. Meredith puts the scene at the time of the Crimean War, and is it not curious that it was then, when "humanity" as a political profession was mostly preached, that one of the greatest crimes against humanity ever done on the earth was being done? By whom? By the political friends and allies of the eminent men who preached

humanity. One of the greatest crimes: I say it advisedly. For this murderous usage of children in factories was not the work of religious fanaticism, or of war-begotten passions, but of greed, greed and a selfishness worse than bestial. It was done by men who subscribed to a great political party and whose aims were large homes and luxuries for their womenkind. An interesting study, the minds of their women, who probably patronised charities. If ever an enlightened age sums up our civilisation, that crime will weigh heavily, I think, and I can no more imitate the calmness of a philosopher when I write about it than I could talk calmly to a man who murdered a child of my own. No wonder Mr. Everard Romfrey talked about humanitomtity. This curious partiality of the political professors of humanity survives. The atrocities in Macedonia are shouted in our ears, the atrocities in Finland are almost unnoticed. But while we compress our lips at humanitomtity, it is well not to forget that the genuine humanitarianism which existed among our fathers was a noble emotion, and that the policy which tried

genuinely to act on it was a noble policy. As a policy circumstances have for long been against it. It is not the fault of England that other empires, consolidating and reaching out, have forced her to play for her own hand. "Humanity" may qualify her actions still: it can no longer be their direct aim. We must guard our own first, or we can guard nothing. Still. . . . It was a noble ideal when it was true, and one feels kindly to those who let it still unwisely obsess them—when the obsession is true also.

VIII

MR. THOMAS CREEVEY[1]

WE are growing richer in letters and journals with decent rapidity. But a little while since Mr. Rowland Prothero gave us the last of his five hundred new Byron letters; later still we have had the correspondence of Lady Sarah Lennox; and now from the Shades comes Mr. Thomas Creevey, M.P., gossip and past-master in the use of other people's houses. The two sets of letters I have chosen from my own reading to put by Mr. Creevey's make an odd contrast with them, by-the-by; Byron, with his world-wide interest and stormy passions, and Lady Sarah, with her romantic history and indestructible fascination, make up a strange trio with Mr. Creevey, shrewdly calculating

[1] *The Creevey Papers:* a selection from the correspondence and diaries of the late Thomas Creevey, M.P., 1768–1838. Edited by Sir Herbert Maxwell. Published by John Murray.

the minor probabilities of politics, and proud of the imitations with which he could enliven a dinner table. But neither of them would have disdained his company, nor would he have been in the least put about by theirs. For if he had not a great soul, he had an amusing observation, and if circumstances led him to live habitually in the society of the great, he was never a snob, but took people on their merits, as he saw them for the moment. It strikes me, I am afraid, as a remarkable fact that Creevey, a man "of no origin," as the pleasant phrase was, whose talents were not really important in politics, and who was a poor man to boot, was able to live where "dukes were two a penny," so to speak, and to have for friends so many of the social and political lights, without condescension on their part or subservience on his. I fear it seems to me remarkable, considering that he was without any extraordinary force of character, or the genius that will always upset the prepossessions of ordinary men, and I doubt if a contemporary Creevey, neither rich nor well-advertised, could easily hold such a position.

The difference, if it exists, I take to lie in the fact that in the time of Wellington and Grey there still prevailed an idea of caste which made such men a Creevey's technical superiors, but left them free to meet him on terms of absolute equality on the ordinary occasions of life; whereas nowadays, such men, clinging consciously or not to a distinction which is professedly abolished, would be more inclined to intimate the distinction in their attitude—or, rather, not men of character and capacity, like Grey and Wellington, but inferior men of their position in life, whom Creevey frequented as easily. Were the contemporary Creevey rich, he might, perhaps, marry into their families with less difficulty than his forerunner, how rich soever: that is another question. But I will not pursue this excursion into the lesser philosophy of social life; it is easy to be prejudiced against one's times. It is clear, however, that Thomas Creevey had a simple self-respect, and was never anything of a parasite. I find him a great deal more independent (for example) than Thomas Moore.

Unfortunately, however, good qualities of

character are not the best recommendations for a letter-writer to posterity. It is pleasant to respect Mr. Creevey for his independence, but for us it is far more important that he was very indiscreet, a considerable scandalmonger, and apt to be both violent and malicious in his dislikes. When the Princess Charlotte died, and all the Royal Dukes had to start a-marrying, the Duke of Kent sent for his friend Creevey in Brussels, expatiated on the situation, and appealing to Creevey's own feelings in regard to Mrs. Creevey, pointed out the painfulness of his position in regard to Mme. St. Laurent, a lady with whom he had lived for twenty-seven years. Pathetic, in his way, this elderly gentleman, who had done no harm, and merely because of his birth might have to break up his establishment and revolutionise his habits, and at least one would have thought the conversation confidential. But Mr. Creevey greatly increased his reputation for amusing talk by repeating it to his friends. Again, when he was staying with Mr. Lambton (afterwards Lord Durham), no delicacy prevented his describing his host in a letter as

a "stingy, swindling, tyrannical kip." I admit the provocation to have been severe: Lord Durham had not given Mr. Creevey enough to eat at dinner. His violence is usually reserved for his political opponents, for he was a partisan after the manner of the day, and among those on his side for Brougham — I shall come to a pretty example later on—but old friendship did not prevent his glancing pretty sharply at faults when he saw them. (He looked with a tolerant eye, however, on the faults of his own youth: "About twelve years ago he wrote to me to inquire the character of a mistress who had lived with me some time before, which mistress he took upon my recommendation" — and, by the way, Charles Greville tells us that he left his papers to his mistress; but in this matter it is enough to say that, not being a Puritan, the fashion of the period did not force him to pretend to be one.) That of the moral faults which help to make him entertaining. He was also intensely inquisitive. When he heard that the correspondence of George and Mrs. Fitzherbert had been burned, "Oh dear! oh dear!" says he,

"that I could not have seen them," and the destruction of George's letters to Lady Jersey was "damned provoking" to him. *He* would not have burnt Byron's diary, you may be sure. He was sometimes rather an old woman in the sort of tattle he would gravely repeat by letter, such as Lady Grey's complaining that her daughter-in-law took down her remarks in a journal: that again is to our advantage. He had a strong, though not a delicate, sense of humour. After persons and politics—and in regard to both his judgment was shrewd within the limits of his prejudices, and his observation always quick for details—he dwells most on houses, furniture, and the like, in which he was curious, like Horace Walpole; he was very severe on the new Buckingham Palace; but he knew nothing of pictures, and could go to Petworth without noticing the Romneys, though that, as his editor says, was a general deficiency of his time. His style is entirely colloquial. There, I think, he has an advantage over Croker, with whom Sir Herbert Maxwell compares him. A fine literary sense brought to the service of letter-writing, and

thoroughly bent to it, the gift of Horace Walpole, is one thing; to write letters in the manner of essays, which is largely Croker's way, is another. Neither Croker nor Creevey is to be mentioned as a letter-writer with Walpole, but Byron, who at least approached him, and who could write good enough "literary" prose when he chose, was content to be colloquial in his letters, and Creevey was well inspired to be so also. I attended pretty closely to his slang, and in general to his use of phrases, having a fad for the niceties of my native tongue in its progression. Slang which occurs in Lady Sarah's earlier letters —*i.e.* in the 'sixties and 'seventies of the eighteenth century—is not in Mr. Creevey's—no "grubbing up" a conversation, or "lending a tascusa." In fact, his slang is quite modern. His acquaintances are often "chaps," and "Croker had made a damned rum figure" in the House. His swearing, for which I noticed that a reviewer censured poor Creevey, is all damns, a word I have heard in my time from people by no means pariahs, the reviewer will be surprised to hear. A lady who had

gone astray was "known to be a 'neat 'un.'" "Carnarvon never uttered," is an aposiopesis I had thought was of only the other day, and so "really beyond" and "really too" smack of the eighteen-eighties. The second Mrs. Tanquerays of the period (as Lady Darlington, and the wife of a son of his friend, Lord Sefton) are poplollies, or pops. "Wouldn't touch it," is used in the sense of not responding to praise, etc., etc., a slightly different use from our own, but these two expressions, and the afore-mentioned "kip," are almost the only obsolete slang. And so much for the qualities of the letters and diaries.

Their interest is chiefly in their content, and I think the best plan by which I can give an idea of that is to name some few of the more notable persons who figure in the volumes, and to repeat something of what he says of them. Of Creevey's own life it is enough for my purpose to say that he was born in 1768, went into Parliament for a pocket borough in 1802, and from that time until his death in 1838 was intimate with the Whig chiefs, especially with Lord Grey, and with the Whig society, and knew in a way nearly everybody else.

The whole of Charles Fox's career is familiar, but in most of the entertaining, intimate records which we have of him he is an uncontrolled young man, offending every one by his gambling, his debts, his innumerable excesses, and conciliating every one by his wit, his manners, and his friendly humanity. So in Selwyn and Walpole; in Lady Sarah he is also a charming boy. It is a little odd to find him in Creevey's earliest letters become "Old Charley." (He had always been "Charles" to his friends; "Charley" belonged to the wider circle of admirers. We all know Charles's and Charlies, and it would be a congenial exercise to discriminate between the names, but I forbear.) Of course he fascinated Creevey also, who calls him this "noble animal," and "amiable creature," and so shows him in his last years still the unaffected, kindly genius he had always been, distinguished by sheer force of intellect, in all else the natural friend to all pleasures and frailties. It is good to know that in 1803 "you would be perfectly astonished at the vigour of body, the energy of mind, the inno-

cent playfulness and happiness of Fox. The contrast between him and his old associates is the most marvellous thing I ever saw—they having all the air of shattered debauchees, of passing gaming, drinking, sleepless nights, whereas the old leader of the gang might really pass for the pattern and effect of domestic good order." Constitution, partly or mostly, but also the essentially innocent soul, the native childlikeness of that lovable prodigy, I like to fancy; it is pleasant to have the record. Pitt, of course, is "the fellow"; the useful working of our glorious party system, which ensures that half the politicians shall belittle any great man on the other side, was in strong force.

The Royal Family was honoured by affording Mr. Creevey a great part of his anecdotes, jokes, and reflections. I cannot but think there was something heartless and unamiable in the manner in which the letter-writers and diarists of the period speak of it. Of course, the extreme reverence of our attitude to the Crown, which is a creation of Queen Victoria's later years, must not be looked for. It would

have seemed un-English to Creevey's contemporaries. I can understand, also, the contemptuous references to the first two Georges, who were despised as foreigners of an inferior social civilisation, and were unkindly men. George III., too, who in many ways claimed respect, was naturally hated for his successful fighting in politics; it is natural that Brougham should refer to him as the "old ruffian" in writing to Creevey, and that "the gentleman at the end of the Mall" should be his most impartial description. But George the Fourth, though he might not claim respect, might reasonably complain (as he complained to Croker) of ingratitude and unkindness towards him personally. The Whigs thought he threw them over. Good; a reason for opposition to him. But, as well as courting them politically, before he was Regent, he had shown a great deal of genuine personal kindness to individuals. Creevey, for instance, was entertained over and over again at the Pavilion; Mrs. Creevey was complimented with Mrs. Fitzherbert's confidences, and so on. (It is hardly necessary to mention that

Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage was regarded as regularising her position, or that even when she had ceased to live with the Regent, she was "received" in English society.) But as soon as it was clear that the Regent intended not to dismiss his father's Ministers his "folly and villainy" became clear to Mr. Creevey, and from that time onwards poor "Prinny," as they called him even after he was King, is handled mercilessly and at times brutally, both by Creevey and his correspondents. It was the mode of the time, and it was unfair, because if the Royalties were fair game for criticism, as of course they were, they were also entitled to ordinary pity and sympathy, and in the main they were all, George and his brothers—perhaps one should except the Duke of Cumberland—very human and good-natured people. But "Prinny has let loose his belly, which now reaches his knees; otherwise he is said to be well"—(Lord Folkestone to Creevey in 1818: George had given up stays)—is a fair specimen of their treatment, and it is rather coarse-fibred. There is, however, a deal that is amusing in all this abuse of Prinny. As,

for example, the Duke's attacking him for *swearing*—of all things in the world. "By God! you never saw such a figure in your life as he is," the Duke is made to say in Creevey's journal. "Then he speaks and swears so like old Falstaff, that damn me if I was not ashamed to walk into a room with him." A touch of Creevey's humour here. It was Lord Thanet who called George the "bourgeois gentilhomme," a phrase which, as Creevey said, would have annoyed him more than "our fat friend." His brothers were treated with the same unkind raillery, and yet they seem to have been homely and unaffected. It was a tradition, no doubt, this hostile attitude, perhaps better than servility. A few stories, however, of William's genuine, though undignified, kindliness are related pleasantly, and Creevey, like the rest of the world, was conciliated by Victoria's virgin modesty and grace; there is a picture one can see of her struggling to get off a tight glove when he was presented to her at Brighton. George's singing has often been mentioned (and criticised), but I had never heard before of his

lending his vocal assistance to the band in the Pavilion, "and very loud, too," Mr. Creevey says. All this early part about him shows at least a pleasant host, and the pumped-up indignation about Queen Caroline might have been less bitter. Still, he was certainly bringing the monarchy down with a run, and when one reads that Dr. O'Reilly, who attended him on his death-bed, said that "with common prudence he might have lived to a hundred," one reflects that perhaps his excesses were for the best.

Creevey's conversations with Wellington are most life-like. Croker's tell one infinitely more of military and political points; but he never gives us the "real thing," the Duke, as he really spoke, in all his bluff sincerity and unconsciousness. Creevey started by undervaluing him as a political opponent, but he was brought round by the Duke's good sense, or, perhaps, a little by the great man's friendliness. One enjoys his saying, just after Waterloo, "By God! I don't think it would have done if I had not been there." Creevey, discreet for once, omitted this sentence in

sending home a report of the conversation, thinking it might sound vainglorious, and rightly perceiving that the Duke had no thought of himself at all. He showed "no triumph or joy," but spoke of the affair as a piece of business done, a grave business which had cost so many lives, just, in fact, as Englishmen like their generals to speak, even to the Duke's plainness. "It has been a damned serious business; Blücher and I have lost 30,000 men. It has been a damned nice thing—the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life." Surely if ever a good Englishman spoke it was then.

There is not much to say of Creevey's friends, unless one were to dive into the smaller politics and pick up very minute pearls indeed of added information. He was at home with Grey, and Lord Sefton, and the twelfth Duke of Norfolk, whom he calls "Barney" or "Scroop." It was Sefton who offered him a dinner in London whenever he dined nowhere else; Grey, with whom he stayed several weeks at a time. With Holland House he was sometimes familiar, sometimes

at feud, resenting Lady Holland's bullying ways—one remembers Melbourne's "damned if I'll dine with you at all!"—and I think enjoying the overtures she would make for his recall. The people he cuts at in passing are legion. He was friends with Brougham at first, nominally so till the end, but, like many other men, soon began to suspect that brilliant eccentric of double-dealing and rapidly arrived at his "low lying dirty shuffling villany." To Macaulay I was pleased—it would be tedious to explain why—to read that he took a great dislike. "Yesterday I dined at Stanley's. Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Gordon were the only performers after dinner, and two more noisy, vulgar fellows I never saw. Fitzroy Somerset, Kempt, McDonald, and I settled them between ourselves afterwards." He disliked Lord John Russell, and was of opinion that D'Orsay was "as ultra a villain as either city," London or Paris, "can produce." That I was sorry to read, but, after all, it is more amusing to read censorious than eulogistic judgments, is it not? Creevey gives you a great many.

Useless to extract many more of the interest-

ing points: how he travelled in the earliest railway, and was terrified by its twenty miles an hour; how a balloon drew out the members from the House of Commons, so that there was a count-out, and Brougham, who had been preparing a speech all day, could not deliver it; how Lady Holland described Lady C. Lamb's notorious *Glenarvon* to Mrs. Creevey, and gave her the key, and the like. I am reminded by this that one sometimes needs a key to Mr. Creevey, where Sir Herbert Maxwell has suppressed names. For his editing in general I offer my humble praises. The book did not require the extraordinarily thorough annotation which Mr. Prothero has given Byron's letters. I think that Sir Herbert might have given occasionally the least bit more of information, for the sake of readers who are not well "up" in the period; Hobhouse, for example, is mentioned several times, and it would have added to their interest to be told that he was Byron's most intimate friend; or when Queen Adelaide's refusal to receive the Duchess of St. Albans (relict of Mr. Coutts) is related, they might have been

told that she had been Mrs. Mellon, the famous actress. Mr. Creevey will make his way to other than the well-informed. In the main, however, Sir Herbert's identifications and dates are all that is required, and his interspersed narrative is excellently to the point. But I am not sure that his suppressions are always wise, quite sure they are not always logical. He speaks of a "severe system of selection," and sometimes gives initials only—once, when all that is said is that certain people were *talking* scandal. Creevey died in 1838; was any one likely to be aggrieved? It is assumed that the King does not object to scandalous stories about his great-uncles, or even about his grandfather; and if that is so, need his subjects be supposed more touchy? In one place Creevey gives the parentage of Captain Garth, which Sir Herbert Maxwell makes "the Duke of . . . ," and the "Princess——," and then remarks that he would "hesitate to withdraw the veil," if Madame de Lieven had not done so. Withdraw the veil indeed! I know I am on more slippery ground if I add that the

suppression of coarse phrases, the "terms too little equivocal for modern taste," does not meet my approval. My reasons are that these books are produced for grown-up people, who would not be supposed to be in danger of adopting offensive terms into their own conversation, that the very omission gives a disproportionate importance to mere fashions of speech, that the terms in question may be interesting for the history of language, and that since we do not expect contemporary notions of taste in other respects, when we read long dead authors, it is foolish to force our contemporary taste upon them in this respect. But I have argued the matter before, and know that I am alone in my opinion. No one ever says or writes anything coarse now, or can endure that his grandfather ever did so either. Be it said that Sir Herbert Maxwell is less squeamish than most other English editors. I take leave of my pleasant gossip a little saddened at the end. For though we may dig up more of his like, I doubt if any one living is preparing a rivalry with him. We push more, and have less leisure generally,

it may be, but I fancy that the Creevey type of man, the man who was in, and of, the most important political or other life of the time, but had leisure from his own advancement to observe and write down, is too scarce. Also, I fancy, that the society he describes, where social gifts were still valued for their own sake, and money was less of an open sesame anywhere, must have been more agreeable, on the whole, than any general society we are likely soon to see again. . . . I began by noting our increasing richness in old letters and diaries; I will end by hoping that the increase may continue. When we see, I forget how many thousand, new novels come out every year, novels which are, for the most part, the superfluous creation of imaginary dullards in a world that is full of real ones, we may surely find room for more of these genuine records of interesting life.

> "Could you melt ten thousand pimples
> Into half a dozen dimples—"

Could we exchange the novels of Messrs. A., B., and C. for another Walpole, or even another Creevey!

IX

ABOUT OUR FICTION

THE thought has occurred to me that the English novel, as we know it from Fielding to Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy, is in point of artistic significance dying, and nearly dead; that, on the other hand, the art of narrative fiction generally is extremely vital in itself and even important in our lives. I am far from stating this as an original discovery of my own, but I do not remember to have seen it set forth in print, and I am tempted therefore to contrive some analysis of the matter, to separate if I can what is only an amiable survival from what is energetic and progressive, and to indicate some tendencies and probabilities. No sort of class list or hierarchy is in my mind. I once attempted such a thing, and still rejoice that I did it anonymously; it was not a discreet

thing to attempt. The subject is tolerably voluminous, and had best be treated for the most part in outline; if I mention a name here and there it is not that I think no other names worth mentioning, but that those in question illustrate the argument.

But first, since this is an examination of an art, and not one of the book-market or the effects of popular education, we must put aside a great majority of the novels which are sold, and an overwhelming majority of those which are published. The multitude of these is a constant subject of rather tedious complaint. Indignant essayists are for ever counting the hundreds or thousands of novels published every week or every month, and throwing them at our heads. There is no need to make a coil of the matter. It is a reading age and country, and our people are at present trivial in their interests; inevitably, what they read will be trivial also; most of their favourite novels are trivial in effect, and do not signify to our purpose. And of the enormous number published, but not read, it is to be said that novels have been for some time in the air, and a

crowd of amateurs has been naturally attracted to the writing of them. It is a fashion, as strumming on the piano was, or "sketching," with the difference that a little money will force the novels outside the range of personal acquaintances, force them, to wit, on the attention of certain wretches called reviewers, whom a foolish custom of the newspapers compels to write about them. Not to appear contemptuous or inhuman, I will confess that such a general impulse once drove me also to write a novel, just as on occasion I have played cricket—incompetent, but anxious to oblige. It is all very unimportant, and perhaps the general uselessness of the fashion is balanced by its discovery, here and there, of a genuine gift—a thought which I regret was not suggested by my personal confession. But the mass of catch-shilling novels and novels written to soothe an innocent vanity does not now concern us.

Evidence for the assertion that the type of novel most familiar to us and our forefathers, since Fielding fairly started it, is almost exhausted, may not leap to the eye of the reader.

Let him consider of what elements the English novel, on the average of its greatest examples, was composed. First, there was the story, the yarn, with its incidents; secondly, there was the examination or development or psychology generally of the leading characters, who, it is important to remark, were usually not extreme or out-of-the-way characters, but fair examples of average humanity, like Tom Jones, Arthur Pendennis, Clive Newcome, Harry Richmond, Evan Harrington, or any of Miss Austen's characters; thirdly, there was the drawing of remarkable or out-of-the-way characters, striking or humorous, subordinate in the scheme of the book, or the subordinate treatment of special phases of life. This is a rough statement, and to be made nicely accurate would need a multitude of qualifications, but I think it will be allowed to hold in the main. The fact that the leading character was most often an ordinary person may be explained by the picaresque origin of the novel—by the convenience that a person whose office was to be a peg for a series of incidents and adventures, should himself be familiar and taken for granted,

so that the surprising events and people he encountered should stand out the more distinctly. The effect of this origin lasted long after the picaresque conception had given place to that of a coherent complication of story or of a composite picture of life. The three elements, of course, have been combined in various degrees. In Walter Scott the story is predominant, though it was, perhaps, on his minor characters that his finest genius, that wide, observant, humour-loving eye of his, was exercised; Miss Austen always, and Thackeray at times, were chiefly concerned with the thorough exposition of common character; of Fielding and Dickens we remember the minor, striking, eccentric characters more than the protagonists or the stories. But the point is that in all our great novelists, down to Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy, as in those of France down to recent years, as in those of Russia so far, these three elements are plain. I take for an example that novel of Mr. Meredith's, which after much pondering and delightful re-reading, I have come to think his greatest—*The Adventures of Harry Richmond*. There we have two

extreme characters, it is true, not subordinate, but the essential protagonists of the book, the Squire and Richmond Roy. They are surely of the very greatest, the most splendid and complete creations in English literature, and both are, as I have admitted, extreme and unusual characters. But still the other elements are strongly present. The more or less ordinary man is there for hero, and on his psychology Mr. Meredith has spent a wealth of minute pains; and there is the yarn, in this case true romance, charged with the right atmosphere, lively and compelling. Certainly I think that no work so fine has been done in English fiction in the thirty years since *Harry Richmond* was written, and it may stand in this place for a supreme example of the old, large method.

An art is eternal, but the modes of it are recurring fashions. It seems almost as though the mere persistence of a mode in art, the mere number of its examples, clogged at length the spirit of the artist, and impelled him to another mode on pain of losing vitality and zest. In so far, at least, as this mode of fiction implies the

elaborate picturing of common life and common characters, he may well feel that anything he can hope to do has been done so often—so often and so much better. Here in England at present our common life and our ordinary types of people have been presented to us in fiction over and over again. We are changing, of course, improving or growing worse, but there has not been, as yet, any general break in our common interests and aptitudes since the time of Thackeray, at least. It may be that such a change will be disclosed before the reader and I are dead. But now the most fanciful of us can only see a beginning. In one attitude, for example, I myself seem to detect the beginning of a change—the general attitude to capital and property. The motive of so many old novels—the question, namely, whether or not the hero or heroine was to be given the means to live in luxury without working—is hardly so thrilling or interesting a motive to us as to our grandparents. Other changes, slight as yet, might be mentioned: the increasing subtlety of our snobbishness, for another instance—not its lessening strength.

But in the main the artist who would concern himself in the old, large manner with our common life has only repetitions to achieve, and for this reason among others, it may be (the hint is not at all exhaustive), he cannot be vital in it.

However this may be, my point is that with Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy the novel as we have so far known it has reached its last vital exemplars. It continues to be written, but there is little energy or worth of art left in it. It will not be required of me that I should take the writers of it one by one and exhibit my reasons for thinking this of them. The opinion would remain a mere opinion, and I should have performed a task almost as useless as unpleasant. I am not denying all merit to these writers, either; observant, accomplished, humorous, they may often be. I think merely that as artists they are otiose, not vital. And I would suggest to the reader that he and I may differ in our classification of modes, so that he may think I am silently condemning some writer for whom my admiration is really unbounded: I would suggest it especially to

a reader who himself writes fiction. It may be well to add—what will be clear later on, but I would not appear inconsistent for a moment—that by "common life" I have meant the average life depicted in our social novels, the life of ordinary, well-to-do people. There are phases of life which may be called common, as being lived by multitudes of people, but are, from the novelist's point of view, fresh ground, or nearly so. The point in this connection is that these phases are his main subject, not a subordinate addition to his theme. Also, if I am right in thinking that a staleness of the novelist's common life and characters may partly prevent an artist who would be vital from writing a novel of the old order, that, of course, does not apply to short stories. Such life and such people may furnish subjects for short stories by no means otiose, because there even a slight change, a subtle originality, may cover the whole small canvas.

I come to the positive and more interesting part of my subject—some account of the contemporary fiction, which, to my mind, has energy and vitality.

It seems to me that the three elements which I have mentioned are no longer fused in this fiction, but are taken separately for exclusive treatment. The artist no longer contemplates a large and complicated picture, compact of these elements, but takes one, and is wholly occupied by it, concerns himself with one motive, is driven by one impulse. The influence of the short story, brought to so artistic a finish of recent years in France, may have something to do with this. It disposes writers to think on single lines, as it were. Indeed, many recent novels I have seen struck me as short stories spoiled, inartistically expanded to make a book; but of course the single motive may be such as rightly to fill the bulkiest volume. We find, then, each of the three elements in constant and varied play, single play, with one exception. The psychology of the common life of old novels, or the description merely of its outward aspects, which I have fancied the chief obstacle to the traditional practice by vital writers, naturally is not much exercised by itself. The work of Mr. Henry James, of course, occurs at once to us. There, un-

doubtedly, is a fine artist who concerns himself elaborately and minutely (at times) with the most trivial actions and thoughts of the ordinary well-to-do classes. Indeed, he has pushed this so far as almost to have created a new art. It might be called the art of leaving nothing out. Pepys is supposed to be the most minutely comprehensive of diarists, but if Pepys had written his diary as Mr. James writes some of his novels, in place of saying "up and dressed" he would have said, "pushed the bed-clothes in a direction opposite from myself with one hand, assisting the later development of the process by a spasmodic action of my legs. The encumbrance of the bed-clothing fairly removed from my person, drew my feet in a position to facilitate," etc., and so on for many pages. It is an art rather curious to me than attractive, and I reserve my warmer admiration for that other and quite distinct phase of Mr. James, when he presents the weird, the uncanny, or the morbid to our minds with an amazing force of penetration. You will hardly find, however, another contemporary English writer, approaching Mr. Henry

James's power, who is concerned with this division, the exposition of normal, educated English life.

The story, the yarn, is eternal. While men have any imagination left about them a story will tickle them. I wonder how many superior people when they see a halfpenny morning newspaper are above reading its surprising feuilleton? I am not sure, however, that the romance, as we generally understand the term, can be said to flourish very remarkably among us. In this respect, at least, it is a pity the old style of novel, with its leisurely combination of features, is no longer the model, because by attending exclusively to the mechanism of their stories and neglecting character almost altogether, our contemporary romancers run a risk of failing to interest us. Their stories are ingenious mechanism, very complicated and clever, but we are watching machines, not men and women. Their protagonists have to be monsters of physical strength to perform their grandiose feats, and monsters of stupidity duly to fall into their difficulties. It is generally a hollow business, I think; I, for one, am

indifferent to their fate. Above all, these romances lack—it is usual to apologise for the inevitable phrase—lack atmosphere. Mr. Chesterton — it is reassuring to me to find myself at one with a younger critic—has pointed out very aptly how the romantic atmosphere never fails Walter Scott, however ordinary the scene he is describing. But our present romancers derive from Dumas, not from Scott, and have little or nothing of Dumas's high spirits and humorous gaiety, which compel the reader to take his characters' humanity for granted. The last English writer to give us romantic atmosphere was Stevenson, in *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston*. Where the yarn really flourishes with energy and proper daring is in the quasi-scientific, fantastic stories of Mr. Wells. They are the legitimate descendants of the *Arabian Nights*, or of such old-world imaginings as *Wandering Willie's Tale*—the old superstition of the supernatural replaced, naturally and legitimately, by the exaggeration of the ascertained wonders of science. They are in the way to do for us what the supernatural yarn

did for our forefathers—for us who disbelieve in the supernatural, but have fancies agog for the natural marvels to be discovered. They are, in their fashion, vitally of their time. Popular as they are, no one yet has imitated them with success—I have read some obvious imitations which were mere fiascos—and therein is the proof that the imagination in them is true in its quality, that their inventor is a true story-teller, not only a possessor of lucky material. We are not richly provided with good yarns, however, because when we have thought of Mr. Wells, we have next to dip down to those "detective" stories, which are again mere mechanism, though more entertaining than our romances, and are generally too improbable for yarns which deal with ordinary life. Wilkie Collins has not yet had a worthy successor.

Striking character, or eccentric, humorous character, and out-of-the-way phases of life—it is here, I think, that our fiction is most generally characteristic and vital. In spite of the marvels of science, and in spite of the great problems of politics, which will certainly confront us

shrewdly at home and abroad, it is a fact (I speak of the average) that we are a somewhat weary and indifferent people, not keenly interested in our usual life, and therefore we welcome the strange and the forcible and (when we understand it) the whimsical. Mr. Wells seems to be the only worker in fiction who can interest us in the marvellous, but we have many writers who in these other ways express a real need of their times, and in doing so often give us sincere and thorough and intelligent work. The success of so thorough and essentially intellectual a performance, in the way of striking character, as Lucas Malet's *Richard Calmady*, was encouraging, though for my part I thought its judgments in psychology open to dispute. Another novel of strong and exceptional characters, done with a thoroughly workmanlike hand, was *A Magdalen's Husband*, by Mr. Vincent Brown. Mr. Conrad is a man whose genius of intuition and whose extraordinary eye for the colour and fire of life might well be seen in a clearer perspective by our critics, might well be distinguished from the facile, respectable qualities of the

writers with whom he is commonly placed on a level. Any oddity to an English mind which his exotic birth and training have given him is a disadvantage, because, working in an acquired medium, his appeal is to the reader's recognition of humanity, and not to a common literary culture. Had he written in his native language and been duly translated, I think his recognition would have been more ample; had he been an artist in English words, as Stevenson was, it would have been immediate and unhesitating at the hands of all competent judges, for his intellect, at once sensitive and powerful, goes farther into the truth of men and the meaning of things than ever did Stevenson's. Well, Mr. Conrad has chosen to write either of striking characters, or, if of ordinary, then with the clear purpose of throwing into relief an out-of-the-way phase of life.

By this last expression I mean, of course, a phase of life unfamiliar to the ordinary readers of English novels. It seems to me that there is something invigorating and vitalising to a writer in the fact that he is showing his reader a new thing. It is, for example, a common

but perfectly true criticism of Mr. Kipling that an exotic theme has always called out his finest gifts. Miss Robins's *Magnetic North,* again, has an intensity of imaginative grip which she would never have shown us in a study of literary or artistic English people, in Bloomsbury or Mayfair. The book is unique, in that, being by a woman, it contains only a few essentially feminine pages, and that it exhibits men, recognisable men, in manly activities away from women—men whose minds are not, as in most women's books, entirely occupied with love affairs. But apart from this singular merit, the book is full of an informative zest, a zest to display the truth of a life with great difficulty only accessible to a woman, which it owes (given the qualities of its author) to the strangeness of its subject. There is, be it said, an unimportant danger in the success of books which take remote places for their scene—that editors are apt to prefer any such story to a better one with a more homely setting, forgetting that the Australian Bush can be made as dull as Piccadilly. But unintelligent editors are a constant danger—of small importance.

Mr. Zangwill occurs to me as another writer who is obviously stimulated by the feeling that he is telling his readers something they do not know, or correcting their false impressions. His books about "his own people" are incomparably his best. I wonder if we should reckon the stories of aristocratic and plutocratic society as studies of out-of-the-way phases? The authors of them, at least, generally assume the airs of discoverers, and have a knowing manner of telling us details we should not otherwise be acquainted with. And I think their books are false for this reason, that the subjects of them are in their ordinary lives much as other well-to-do English; but these writers, anxious to be continuously informing, leave all that out, and give us nothing but gambling, the divorce court, crowded receptions, and meals at expensive restaurants—an unnecessarily repulsive picture. In this case the air of discovery is innocent enough. I like it less when it appears in those studies of so-called "low life" which are very popular at present. We are all mixed up in this country; we might all be not very distant relations; you may see an aristocratic face

on an unskilled labourer, and a very plebeian one on a peer. We are all very much alike, and I confess I feel ashamed when the speech and manners of my "lower-class" fellow-citizens are presented to my superior eye as though they were some strange animals. Some such air is perhaps inevitable in studies which, from the average reader's point of view, are of out-of-the-way phases, and I know for certain that one, and perhaps the most truthful, of the authors I refer to has no idea of patronage or of superiority to his subjects; but I do not think the "Aren't they funny?" attitude is entirely of my own imagining.

Sometimes, of course, these lower-class characters are directly humorous, conscious wags, or people whose characteristics would be amusing in any society; and then the winking manner is not unkindly, though it may not be artistically effective. Humorous or eccentric character, however, is not the most fruitful theme of our fiction-writers, as indeed we can hardly expect it should be in an age of spreading uniformity, an age when "Brown grows liker every day to Jones." The whimsical

philosophy which Sterne made so popular with our ancestors is somewhat to seek now, and satire raises but a timid front. The magnificent figure of Mr. Dooley is rather solitary. One of the most amusing of light satires I have read for a long time is *A Great Man,* by Mr. Arnold Bennett, artfully exposing the genesis of a popular novelist, which I, not being a popular novelist, welcomed with delight.

Such is my account of our fiction as it stands for the present. The old-fashioned novel, as a living form of art, seems to me doomed, and I think that special studies of special phases of life and of abnormal and minutely observed character will continue to fill its place. The conditions of the time and the mental atmosphere both of our most vital writers and of their most intelligent readers make for strong, concentrated, exclusive, and rather abnormal studies. I think Professor Courthope—but I am not certain: he or another scholar and critic—has laid it down that great art, or at least the art of great periods, is always concerned with the normal. I remember thinking

that he laid himself open to too many clear exceptions for the formation of a rule, in Latin if not in Greek literature, and assuredly in English. But I fear I see no insuperable obstacle to admitting that this is not a great period in art, and that the present art of our fiction-writers is not a great one. If that be so, however, it is also true that no great art was ever the mere imitation of a mode which had lived its day. As for the simple yarn, which is eternal, I wonder if in my time anyone will recapture the spirit of romance, which is eternal also, and may be forced from the least likely matter. I am sure of one thing, that it is not to be recaptured by dressing up contemporary lay-figures in old clothes and setting them to fight duels. You cannot so revive it any more than you can revive civic patriotism by setting Notting Hill to fight South Kensington, as in Mr. Chesterton's fantasy — a book whose serious and quite true idea seemed to escape its critics.

That the greater number of our energetic writers will continue for a long time to write narrative fiction I believe to be certain. There

have been signs that many of them would as lief write plays, but the market for these is very much smaller, and subject to a capricious and incalculable control. And the journalistic field for thoughtful and self-stimulating work has been curtailed—so much of it occupied by enterprises for which ignorance and a vulgar level of thought are rigidly required. Given, then, this continuing vogue of narrative fiction, the question is asked if there is any harm in it. As I have said, I do not think the answer of great importance, but I would indicate in conclusion one way in which I think the vogue of fiction really does harm, adding that any appreciable good work in it will more than balance the account.

Fiction is written by people who have a case to set forth, and some capacity for doing it, but with no gift for story-telling, and no ear for dialogue. They write fiction where straightforward description, theory, and comment would be better. In that there is a distinct waste of the good, and a distinct production of the bad. The objection to fiction "with a purpose" was often pedantically urged. If you have the

necessary ability there is no reason why you should not state a case—of course, you cannot prove it—in a novel. The objection is one of those limitations which are sought to be imposed on people who can do things by people who cannot. It was, I think, for an instance, unreasonably urged against Mrs. Humphry Ward, since her ability to write fiction could hardly have been denied. (I have noticed, by the way, that she supports my general view in her last book, which is the study of a curious and unusual phase of life—the case of Madame du Deffand and her protégée.) But if you can state a case plainly, but are not skilled in drawing character or telling a story, it is a pity if the omnipresence of the novel should lead you to write one. I read the other day a book about a draper's shop which gave one an informing and interesting account of such a place, and of the hardships which may be suffered by the workers therein. That was its *raison d'être*, but it was cumbered by an otiose story which wasted one's time. Another novel which should have been a treatise was one about Jews (*not* by Mr. Zangwill), where the

author wished to explain that intermarriage of them and Gentiles was a bad thing, and encumbering himself with a story for which he had an indifferent aptitude, was driven to make a love-sick girl talk of "the genius of atavism."

Such mistakes are a pity in the interest of the proper use of talents. But perhaps a really fine gift is seldom so misled. I am tempted, unconscionable time writing though I am, to discuss the evil alleged against the prevalence of fiction, which is the extent to which the inexperienced adopt their beliefs from it. But I have tried to keep to my subject, the present state of the art, and will not be lured into sociology. I may add, however, germanely to my subject, that in so far as our writers leave the old themes, the old elaborate love affairs, for example, of average people, the less likely are they actually to influence the unwary by misrepresentation. And if it is, on the whole, the less able writers, and the most apt to err, who still offer models for possible imitation, I imagine that their influence, for good or evil, is less great than they suppose it.

X

THE VOGUE OF WRITERS

TEN years ago, and a little more and a little less, there was quite a boom in writers, at least in London. Essayists flourished and patted one another to a moderate popular applause. The air was dark with critics. Novelists of course—but of them hereafter. Even poets were granted a momentary hush. It was a little something, I assure you, to have made a hit with one's little book. People with large houses liked to fill them from the publishers' lists. There were many literary enterprises in the world of journalism, the periodical world, which claimed and received attention, some of them sound and virile, some merely obtrusive and excessive.

Well, in so far as this little hubbub meant a genuine interest in letters we may grieve for its passing. In so far as it was merely an

artificial fashion we should be glad. For in that regard its patronage was bad for the weaker of its protégés, who might have been led to strut and peacock instead of working in unruffled obscurity. Social patronage, in particular, is always bad for an artist, even a minor artist, and though it affects not the self-respecting man, whose social life is based on social reasons, it is apt to find among the others a sadly extended bag.

All that is past, like many another fashion doubtless to recur in due time. But I wonder if there has been a change in the subject-matter, so to speak, of the fashion which may account for the passing as well as the natural instability of fashions. Booms, in such matters, are mainly for the young. Now, ten years or so since, there were a number of young writers—really young, in the twenties—who brought off excellent effects and gave very respectable promises. Some of those promises have been kept, others have not. A. has blossomed out handsomely, B. does honest hack-work. But my concern is not with these comparative oldsters. I look for their succes-

sors, and I ask myself if they are there. I ask myself: perhaps I shall get a "damned silly answer," as some one suggested to an orator: it may be that I am a soured veteran. They are not very obvious to my spectacles. Only one name rises immediately to my consciousness; I will not mention it for fear of being invidious; it is that of a young writer who grows you paradoxes, while you sleep, all over the place; he surprises of himself, but he is only one. Who are the others—the essayists, critics, poets in the twenties? Quick! You are silent. Is it that they lack a boom, or does the boom lack them? I should like to know.

Assuming for the moment that the latter alternative is true, I suggest an economical reason. Even here, you see, questions of money and material competition pursue us. Young essayists and critics have to live, and they are commonly found living on journalism. Most of them must work in journalism before they make their names and print their books; the happy minority which wisely houses itself in the Civil Service is a minority still. Now,

the demand in journalism for educated men is not what it was, nor their pay either, and at the same time the demands in England on men's purses in the sumptuary way have risen. That is a pity, because the implication is not of more comfort but of more display. But the fact is so, and you cannot expect young men to resist all the influences of their time. They see that the respectably paid places in journalism are few, and in a general way the abler of them betake themselves elsewhere, and are immersed in pursuits which leave no time or taste for essays and criticism. This change in the demand had begun some years before the time of that little boom ten years ago; the "old days" of the *Saturday Review* and the *St. James's Gazette*, for example, when the sort of educated journalism I mean was well paid were over. But the change had not been appreciated; it was still a common thing for clever young men at the Universities to contemplate writing for bread. The more popular Press, I am told—and if I may say it without offence, I believe—is suspicious of scholars and Universities. It may be wrong in

this: I think it is, remembering that the one man who has made a name worth having on the popular Press in its modern form, or indeed a name at all, has been the late George Steevens, a finished scholar, and by far the most widely read man of his age I have known. Also I reflect that ignorance is not an absolute guarantee of cleverness. But with the old opportunities very greatly diminished and the new enterprises caring not for them, clever young scholars turn away from journalism, and it is from them that the material for any little boom in writers must chiefly come, if it is not to be wholly ridiculous. All this to explain the dearth, if there be a dearth, of promising young writers. Of course it does not matter.

I promised a word of the novelists. The present condition and probable evolution of their art are the subject of another paper. But from the point of view I have been taking, the poor novelists suffer very hardly from their mere numbers. I should say, off-hand, that I read as many clever efforts by new hands to-day as I read ten years ago. But who can separate their names? They must grow fairly old at

their task before they stand out individually. No dearth of material here, only too much: the reason being that every kind of man and woman, and boy and girl, can take a hand at this game, whereas the others mentioned must imply some little specialised talent. There must be something very discouraging to a conceited or even a merely sensitive novelist to feel that he is joining the ranks of an unnumbered host, even as an unknown painter must surely feel it ridiculous that his picture is one of thousands at Burlington House. He has my sympathy.

MAINLY OF OTHER THINGS

I

BACKSTAIRS

I HAD occasion recently to talk with an actor, and went for the purpose to the stage door of his theatre. An actor's room at the theatre, especially if he is a manager, is a natural place of business for him, of course. I have heard a man of letters, however, object to such an appointment, complaining of the backstairs approach, and more especially of a dressing-room for the scene of a business interview, as being unsuited to his dignity. Not so I! On me the stage door, up some narrow alley for choice, the dim porter's lair, and the cramped staircase never pall. I trust sincerely that even if I am ever rich and famous no actor will ever suggest coming to see *me*, or appoint his club or private house for a rendezvous. I can go to clubs and private houses any day; for me the stage door! You go up the narrow alley, curiously eyed—and *that's* a

pleasure!—by sympathetic loafers; you push open the stage door—it opens to the palm like doors on a stage!—the porter, or whatever the attendant there is called, sends up your card, grudgingly, as one who guards the privacy of a great man; another man beckons mysteriously from above; you go up the narrow staircase and follow him along a passage, where—who knows?—some charming lady in her "make-up" may frou-frou past you; a gentle tap—you are admitted to the sacred room. And let that room, I beg, always be a dressing-room. I love the grease-pots and the paint-pots. I love the looking-glasses and the litter. I love to see the actor change before my eyes as we talk, and I shall never forget the pleasure I had when one, gentlest and most amiable of mortals, turned suddenly and confronted me in a fierce Syrian beard and eyebrows to match. Ah, the stage door and behind the scenes! The mystery, the intimacy, the infinite suggestion! Gently, gently, my muse, we are men of letters.

Thackeray complains somewhere of the dinginess and meanness behind the scenes in con-

trast to the lights and brilliance of the stage. So do not I. The managers, I am sure, insist on the dinginess and meanness from a native love of dramatic contrast, an artistic sense which for the moment Thackeray wanted. I think it helps to conciliate our affection for Thackeray that in the midst of his many great excellences he so often lets us feel superior to him. He wanted more light and more brilliance, as who should want a chop instead of coffee after dinner. The complaint is characteristic, a part of his theory of disillusion ; just as he would insist that actresses and singers and dancers, so gay and beautiful before the curtain, were all old and haggard and wrinkled behind it. The artistic soul would count it disillusion only if before the curtain the effect cheated his memory ; what he sees behind is a fresh experience altogether. But as a matter of happy fact actresses are more often than not as beautiful off the stage as on it, and often far more agreeable, in Thackeray's teeth. Many have talents apter for private than for public success. For myself, I have never been disillusioned in this way, and if I had been the pride of it would have well supported me.

Backstairs ! In the theatre or out of it their charm is everlasting. Think of the backstairs of kings and courts, of Whitehall and Charles II. and N——no ; we have heard too much of the hussy, who was by no means the most interesting of those ladies, jolly but rather simple set as they were. There have been wickeder and more dramatic intriguers than those who used the backstairs of Whitehall, but Charles the Second's Court stands as a type of backstairs influence, since there it was so all-powerful. Backstairs influence ! The thing itself is generally mean and commonplace enough, but even in these days what an enchantment in the name ! Even in these days it suggests all kinds of romance. Backstairs influence ! The Minister, stern and business-like, speaks to the deputation, inartistically huddled about. Yes, gentlemen, the demand is reasonable ; I will see that it receives due attention. The deputation thanks him in matter-of-fact phrases ; its slovenly frock-coats, its baggy trousers, its common commercial faces are shown out. The Minister is alone, and—hist ! a mysterious rap. He flushes, wavers, pulls aside a piece of tapestry.

BACKSTAIRS

A secret panel is pushed slowly open. A beautiful radiant figure enters. She threatens, flatters, cajoles. Then do as you will. I am your slave. She puts forth a white hand, flashing with jewels, seizes the memorial of the Protectionists, Free Traders, War Office reformers, what you will, and tears it in pieces with a triumphant laugh. She had come up by the backstairs.

That is the gay suggestion. Alas for the reality! If we searched very cleverly for backstairs influence in English political life we might find that a Minister's wife, not beautiful but merely persistent, had persuaded a Minister to give her sister's husband's first cousin a very minor appointment. A little while ago the phrase was used (very foolishly) about the decision of a statesman on a question of politics, and it turned out that the backstairs influence meant was that of another eminent statesman, an old gentleman of over seventy, all that there is of the most respectable. Alas for romance! Even a modern king, at least an English king, can give your imagination no assistance based on fact. If he wished he could not confer public honours without public

reasons. He can give his private friends the honour of his society—and even that undoubted right will be criticised by the disappointed—and that is all.

A few years ago we heard a great deal of feminine influence at the War Office. But what was alleged was merely that weak officials had yielded to the open pressure and persuasion of ladies in their own intimate society. In any society if men grow weaker, women are apt to grow stronger, and if it is true, as it is sometimes pretended, that our statesmen are of weaker fibre than of old, no doubt the influence of women would gain; not, as with the strongest men in all times, the influence of immemorial arts, but the influence of domineering wills. But *that* is not backstairs influence. There is no fascination for our fancy there.

We must go back to past ages for backstairs influence with really lively and dramatic effects. But the backstairs remain, and I say that they are always delightful. They suggest that you are more intimate, further "ben," as the Scotch say, than before. Even in private houses I will reach my room that way whenever it is possible.

II

ENGLISH CLASSES

I HAVE been reading an account of a play in which the situations arose (the writer said) out of the marriage of an "upper-middle-class" man to a "lower-middle-class" woman. Not pretty phrases, are they? How far they imply, as in the case of the play they were meant to imply, genuine and useful distinctions of culture and taste, how far their rather rough and unsympathetic tone of the social drill-sergeant is really practical, are questions to which in my casual way I shall return. But the unlovely phrases set me thinking first of all of the extraordinary complexity and involution of this class business in England. I wish that some philosopher with a strictly scientific habit of mind but a trivial taste would set himself to a thorough classification, with tables and diagrams, of our classes. He would

have to determine first the several grades in so far as they can be distinguished, and next (of course keeping to the average) how each grade respects or despises the grades above or below it. Thus, if the classes were A, B, and C, and so on, they would be arranged in several tables in accordance with the ideas of precedence held by each of these classes, A, B, and C, etc., with regard to itself and the others. So if you are a wholesale bootmaker you could find out at a glance how a peer, a barrister, or a boot-black ranked you in the social scale. There might also be a table expressing what distinctions, if any, are made by intelligent people who try to see men as they are. All this would be the merest ground plan of the work, of course. A multitude of excursuses and appendices would be needed, and something colossal in the way of prolegomena. Such a work, when completed, would be of immense value to the foreigner, to whom the present confusion must be bewildering. And incidentally it would enable me when my friend Jones, an ordinary barrister, speaks contemptuously of "the middle classes," to know (*a*)

what he means by the middle classes; (*b*) if he thinks he belongs to them; and (*c*) if he thinks I belong to them.

Thackeray, in a minutely observant way, but not in a very scientific spirit, did a great deal to inform his generation on the subject. But it is become far more involved and subtle since his day; the progressive mixing up of classes leads the single-minded snob into a quagmire of inconsistencies if you cross-examine him. Take, for instance, the question of trade. The idea that its pursuit is incompatible with the status of a gentleman is quite a modern invention. To apprentice his younger son to a tradesman in the neighbouring town was a natural proceeding to the country gentleman of old. Also, while this particular form of snobbery has grown up in the last two hundred years or so, we now have members of recognised "great families" with fat titles going into trade. What is the snob to say? Can he object to Bob Smith without objecting to Lord Robert Brown? Yet the distinction between trade and professions is still pushed to an incredibly puerile minuteness. A and B

are next-door shopkeepers ; A makes a parson of his son, B takes his into the business ; A's grandson despises B's grandson on the score of his inferior birth. And that sort of imbecility in varying degrees runs through English life, and plays havoc (among fools, of course) with freedom and courtesy.

A man is ranked altogether differently by different people. Mr. Levantheim, whose father was a Frankfort money-lender, who owns three large houses and consorts with dukes, regards himself—or certainly Mrs. Levantheim regards herself—as definitely of the aristocracy, the natural superior of Jones and me, but Jones regards Levantheim as unfit to black his (Jones's) boots. Some people, again, still regard players as persons of no account, others as somewhere in precedence between earls and marquises, "actor-managers" between royal and ordinary dukes, and so forth. An exhaustive tabulation would make these obscure things plain.

As for the intelligent Englishman who respects himself for what he may be and tries to see other men as they are, his position is probably something as follows. One class he

admits to be apart. So long as the institution of monarchy remains with us he admits it is a logical and convenient corollary that royalty is socially a definitely superior class, entitled to a deference not given to others. Americans, if I may say so, proud of their own equality, are inclined to attribute to him a sort of servility towards royalty from which he is free; in some past reigns his criticism has been of the freest, and he is happy in this and the last that it has not been stimulated. For the aristocracy, if he belongs to it, it is quite possible that he has still a feeling of caste he would not confess—that is merely human; if he does not, he grants it no social privileges outside the House of Lords, or in such trifles as precedence at formal dinners. Save for the legislative privilege—a political question not for these pages—he regards it as a pleasantly picturesque survival. There, again, Americans sometimes misjudge him, sometimes take (I have been told) when they join our aristocracy a view of their position he does not share. If I may put in a word for myself, I confess to rather a liking for your genuine old families, people

who represent the direct line of a knightly house for eight or nine hundred years; but they are very few, and are hardly to be found among our titles. The intelligent Englishman (to go back to him) takes little account indeed of all the minor distinctions which have their absurd value only in the small radius about them. For it is a curious fact, which they who talk of classes and masses quite forget, that the lower you go in the social scale the keener are the differences.

The philosophy of the matter I take to be roughly that our system of classes is in essence an inconvenient survival from a caste system that had its meaning and uses. Inconvenient, if not worse, I say, for this reason; unintelligent Englishmen—and most people everywhere are unintelligent—who admit that A, B, and C classes are superior to themselves, thereby weaken that sense of possession in the country which a citizen should feel with no qualification. So much, I think, is true, but I believe the inconvenience to be passing away. The usefulness of those terms we started withal, your upper-middle and your lower-middle? In-

finitesimal, I do believe. They may still roughly express real differences in culture and taste, but in my own experience the exceptions are so many, we are being so rapidly mixed up, we are growing so rapidly in a rough way alike—save always the really cultivated, who must always be few and for whose qualities class is no sort of guarantee—that I think it hardly worth while to keep them up. Hardly worth their ugliness.

III

OF POLITICAL MEETINGS

STRANGE how slow is the adaptation of useful inventions to common life. Four hundred and fifty years at least since the invention of printing, and undergraduates still sit on plaguey hard seats in lecture-rooms to hear what they could read (more thoroughly in half the time) sitting in comfortable armchairs at home, and smoking the brain-assisting pipe ; and other people will sit, also uncomfortably, it is probable, crowded in an atmosphere where the microbes of disease swarm so thickly that (as the late Mr. Bright might have said) you can almost hear the flapping of their wings—sit in this atmosphere and listen for hours to what will be all in the papers to-morrow, straightened out and made comparatively lucid, to what in most cases they have all read in the paper already many times. It is not strange, perhaps, that horses should

still drag the traffic in towns beside the motor-cars, but strange it is that political meetings should exist beside newspapers.

This not of all political meetings, I need not say. Not even of all lectures to undergraduates. I remember, for example, of my own time at Oxford that there was an artist who could make fun of John Stuart Mill with a comic intonation no book could have added, and one or two others whose oral methods did seem to make obscure things clear. So there is at least one public speaker in this country who by aid of a powerful personality can generate or renew public enthusiasm for his cause : his meetings are useful, even necessary. Two or three public speakers are agreeable to hear, apart from what they have to say, having some natural or acquired art of oratory : their meetings are worth attending, even if not necessary. We others who are not much influenced by speeches, but who form our opinions by study of the facts, still enjoy these two or three—there may be more : I confine myself to my own taste and experience—in the way of art. Again, electors may like to see

their candidates, and citizens in general to see their important men, and the meeting is an opportunity; but for this purpose it lasts ten times too long. In most cases, however, the whole affair is mere fatuity and futility. You listen to a halting mediocrity laboriously and imperfectly expounding what you know already, or can learn more easily and more fully otherwise, and the nett result is weariness in you, increased vanity in the performer, and impaired health in every one concerned.

Surely all this might be left to newspapers. Heaven knows they do many useless and offensive things—but here at least is an opportunity for them to do some positive good. The object of most speeches, or at least all that they effect, is the statement that the speaker holds such or such opinions. Very good. The newspapers might refuse to report any speech whatever, except those made by four or five politicians who should be agreed upon by a general vote: I should prefer the vote to be taken from a very limited constituency, but let that be. On the other hand, they could provide space, the London papers for the

prominent politicians, the local for the dimmer lights, in which the worthy creatures could state their opinions, and their reasons—if any—for holding them. So could a great deal of discomfort be avoided and the State be none the worse. Let it be done.

I will take an instance of a useless meeting which might not be obviously so, arguing *a fortiori*. It was my fortune some time ago to listen to an eminent statesman for an hour and a half. (The precise occasion does not signify, and I wish to avoid an essay in politics.) He was really an eminent man, one who has many claims on the respect of his fellow-countrymen. But it so happened that he had nothing fresh whatever to advance on behalf of the cause for which he spoke, no new argument, no new fact, no new consideration whatever. And his many excellent qualities do not include even the beginning of effective oratory. His opinions were known already, but perhaps it was necessary they should be emphasised : a letter of half a dozen lines to the newspapers would have secured that. His facts and arguments, such as they were, had

all been stated, and, to be frank, stated far more strongly and lucidly, many times in several newspapers of his side. Then what on earth was the use of his speaking an hour and a half? It must have bored him—no one watching and listening to him could doubt that —and it must have bored nearly everybody else. There was little enthusiasm, and that only for well-worn platitudes. The cheering was perfunctory and polite. Part of the audience was female, and that part of course was the more appreciative. Just as in private life a woman will always pretend to be delighted by your old anecdote, while a man will tell you brutally that he saw it in *Punch* years ago, so here, while the men "hear-hear'd" rather tamely, the women greeted every hackneyed argument with glances of joyful interest, revelling in the intellectual feast, and I dare say that little exercise in social hypocrisy was healthy. But otherwise I believe no man or woman took any good from that political meeting, and for my part I took the influenza.

If the papers were to report public speeches

as they really are delivered, I fancy a great deal of this oratory would be quenched. There is much make-believe about this matter among us. We insist that our eminent men shall be eminent all round, and among other things good speakers. So when a speech is reported at all, it reads more or less coherent and straightforward. But it is not so delivered. In America, where public speaking is a general habit, some say a disease, speakers are at least fluent as a rule. With us it is otherwise. A true report of a really eminent statesman would have read in one place as follows: "I—er—ladies and gentlemen—I—er—am—I am not going"—the orator paused and drank some water, paused again, consulted his notes, and resumed, but left the first beginning to its fate—"I was about to say that I am—er—desirous of—er—impressing upon you the—er—expediency of adopting a certain course, and the—er—expediency of resisting, resisting, a—er——" he thought hard for the right word, and finally gave us again "a certain course." In this case one was able to admire the calmness with which the speaker suffered his own hesitation

and lack of words, and to respect the indomitable British doggedness, but still . . . was it worth an uneasy seat and all the microbes in the air? "Cheaper for you," said the cabman, "and cheaper for me if you'd taken a 'bus."

Diffidence, or perhaps a certain standard of manners, deprives many of us of what is perhaps the only enjoyment possible at a political meeting of the usual kind, the pleasure of interruption. To shout "Good old Joe!" or some opposite war-cry to the discomfiture of a speaker, is no doubt an agreeable amusement. A riot may be exciting fun, and heaven forbid I should help to destroy any occasion of liveliness in these dull days. I think, however, it may be more easily and less wastefully procured by a turn with the gloves or a football match. And I can think of no other service the mediocre meeting gives us. Let us perfect the megaphone and turn on the really moving speakers at meetings all over the place. But for the opinions of their wearisome lieutenants let us take advantage of the invention of printing. It is four hundred and fifty years old, and its uses should be understood.

IV

THE DOCKS

NO: not "Docks I have been sentenced in." Most of my friends who heard that I had been to the Docks made some such remark, and I myself made it to those who did not. We are not, perhaps, a witty nation, but we like our little joke.

"I am sick," said I to the Editor, "of literary subjects. The world can do without my opinion of deceased great writers, or my opinion of some one else's opinion of them. Why, again, should I offend a contemporary by finding fault with him or by praising his rival? Movements? What movements? I see only people marking time." We discussed rather wearily one or two other matters of which I may pretend to some knowledge, and they were either tedious to me or unsuited to his magazine. "Then why," said he at last, "why not take a subject of which you know

nothing whatever?" An illimitable horizon, I admitted; but I could not see the usefulness of the effort. He was delighted with his idea, however; the impression made on a previously ignorant person by a scene or an incident familiar to many other people—he thought it would be interesting. "Go to the Docks," said he, "and write what you think of them." I demurred for some time. The written impression business is, I think, very much overdone. Who wants to know whether it was a clear or a foggy day when I went to the Docks? Who cares whether the dock-hand I chiefly conversed with was a big strong man or a weak and feeble one? Unless you know a place, another man's impression of it means nothing to you: that is why books of travel are such hopeless reading when they are not telling you of manners and customs. If you know a place, on the other hand, the chances are that you do not like it well enough to care to read of it, and if you do, that pleasure of recognition is rather a stupid one for a man of sense to provide. Also, the scheme suggested the copy-hunting of a journalist, which

I have always hated ever since I tried it, and failed dismally, when I first began to write. But the Editor was so cheerful about it that with a fatal sympathy I consented. That is to say, I consented to go to the Docks, and thereafter to write something. I did not undertake to bore my readers with any detailed description of what I saw.

With that understanding let us commence: the Docks and my qualities and defects are to take their chance as Heaven wills. You catch the Editor's idea, I suppose? No statistics or useless information. Others will sing how many matches could be made out of all the wood I saw imported there from Jamaica and Canada, or how many times higher than St. Paul's would all the cases of rum and dates reach if any idiot put them end to end. The most definite fact I can give you is that if a man in average health walks for several hours about the Docks, he becomes extremely tired.

But before you can appreciate my impression you must learn my anticipation. I went to a friend who knows all about ships and naval manœuvres and gunnery and torpedoes, and

told him I was going to the Docks. "You will be Shanghaied," said he. To be Shanghaied, it appeared, was to be drugged in some horrible den, to be taken on board ship in that condition, to wake up in mid-ocean, and to be compelled to work for the rest of the voyage. It would be a consolation that my kidnappers would probably lament the waste of good drugging material, but the prospect was agitating. I asked him what I should see, and he replied many things, but that all I should really notice would be the mud. He seemed annoyed that a non-expert person should presume to go near ships at all; comforted that I should probably be at least hocussed and robbed.

A more credible cause of uneasiness—for I determined not to go into horrible dens, and was unlikely to be drugged in the open—was the anticipation that I should see crowds of men doing longer and harder work than ever I do. As a philosopher I do not believe in the benefits of hard work, in the platitudes which tell of its dignity and of the misfortune of idleness, and I further know that in a complicated social system the directly and obviously

useful labour is not necessarily worthier than such labour as my own. But my natural instinct is to feel rather ashamed in the presence of those who work more strenuously and for longer hours than I, and also to feel that in a broad view of the social system an ordinary writer—one who may offer now and then a shred of instruction, but whose main office is to amuse—is merely a sort of Punch, inferior by his office to citizens who serve the State directly. But "Pooh, Davey, Punch has no feelings!" and I will not dwell upon mine.

But I am relapsing into generalities, and must get to the Docks. It may have been the cheerless day, or the slack season, or some other inconstant cause: certainly the upshot of my impressions was intense gloom, profound discontent. The gloom of a cheerless, dull, unhappy scene; discontent with a civilisation which is so slowly striving to a possible good through so much hardship and waste and injustice. Mankind, I thought, may have gained this or that, may be on its way to we know not what of perfection, but what have *these* men gained, and to what will *their* way

tend? I speak of the men standing about outside the West India Docks, unemployed. For my anticipation of seeing strenuous work was not realised; it was a slack season, and few jobs were going. Now this is not the place, I know, for an essay in economics or sociology, and a brief remark on such subjects as poverty and property, or this of the unemployed, is apt to sound cheap. But I will venture, for my peace of mind, trusting not to alarm any harmless reader, to say as much as this: that except in time of pestilence, or other general disaster (if necessarily unforeseen), it is a disgrace to any community that in it an able-bodied and sober man, willing to work, should be without work, and therefore without food. "It has always been so and always will be so." It has not always been so; if it will always be so, we know not: it is so now for lack of public intelligence and public conscience. If there is no work for these men in England, then either work could be provided by a wiser economy or they could be taken elsewhere, where their work is needed. The negation of both alternatives means partly that well-meaning people

are not intelligent enough, and mostly that the mass of the prosperous care nothing. *Homo homini lupus*—in more ways than deliberate oppression. The man with whom I walked about the Docks was intelligent and well informed; his face showed he was no drunkard, his build that he was fairly strong; a police sergeant had picked him out, as he would not have done had his character been bad. This man was dependent on the arrival of a chance stranger for his food that day—there had been no job for him. I know a man with less valuable qualities who has twenty thousand a year. No, dear reader, I am not going to force socialism down your unwilling throat. But I assure you that if this civilisation of ours is really a stage to better things, the destitution of the one and the excessive provision for the other of these two men will surprise posterity. For my part I am inclined to think that posterity will be a knave; but that is neither here nor there. The sight of these unemployed Dock hands, and the thought of the stupidity which wasted their chances of happiness in life, gave me a sombre view of our present civilisa-

tion at least. We know that, historically, the "social contract" theory was a fantastic figment; but it roughly expresses our sense of fairness, and those men, who had been deprived of savage freedom, I felt had been swindled out of their compensation. They had been happier in caves. So I felt in looking at the rows and rows of squalid houses, as I came down the railway—as indeed one feels in any approach to London or departure—houses where cleanliness was impossible, which hideous sights and sounds encompassed perpetually. . . . I bore you, good easy reader, but you will understand that if my impression of the Docks was unhappy, it may not have been altogether the fault of the ships and packing-cases.

The West India Dock, which I entered first, was guarded by numerous policemen, and policemen I met frequently afterwards. They removed any fear of being kidnapped and my faith in another expert. A sergeant was kind enough to provide me with a guide, and we went inside. Ships . . . sheds . . . packing-cases. More ships . . . more sheds . . .

more packing-cases. Many ships . . . many sheds . . . innumerable packing-cases. *Voilà* the Docks. I am not one whose heart is uplifted by size and numbers. Show me a log of wood and say it came from Jamaica; good—my imagination will roughly present a picture of Jamaica, and my reason will note the wonderfulness of man's works, how near are come to be the parts of this planet; yes, there is romance in the fact that this log of wood came from Jamaica. Show me an immense shed full of logs of wood, and tell me they came from Jamaica: my imagination and reason will do no more for me. There is something fine in this shed of huge trunks, a whole clan of noble, gracious creatures exterminated by puny man. But I am no poet to dwell upon it; still less can I dwell upon cases of figs, cases of dates, barrels of rum. . . . The work that goes on in the Docks concerning these imports would excite the keen attention of other minds, but mine was content to remain vague, if you will have a faithful report. An education entirely classical? Perhaps so, but it has left me interested enough in the farrago

of general life, the ambitions and amours and politics of men ; only the details of machinery and handicrafts appeal not to me. I thought of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and could imagine his keen glances and vital sympathy : how instinctively he would ask the question that should bring on him a shower of facts. I felt myself a log. But after all, I suppose nothing happens at the Docks except the loading and unloading of ships with hands and cranes. Some human facts I learned from my guide, but they were typical of poverty and hardships, and I am not disposed to repeat them.

Of the ships, though I cannot speak as an expert, neither can I as altogether an ignoramus. What struck me—and perhaps vainly pleased me—was the number of sailing merchant vessels I saw, in proportion to the number of steamships. A very beautiful thing —no, I do not intend an absolute platitude, for I speak of the contemporary merchant sailing-ship—a very beautiful thing is she, who flies round the world, often two years away, with her strength and towering beauty. The full masts and the tracery of ropes—the beautiful

creatures! The liners, with their sullen slate-coloured hides and sulky swollen aspect—the ugly monsters! "The liner, she's a lady," says Mr. Kipling. Well, yes, perhaps, but a lady fit to mate with an over-fed, purse-proud, ungainly alderman of tradition. You think of her tonnage and the number of persons she can house, even as the populace admires the aldermanic lady for the price of her diamonds and furs: but as I said, that exaltation of spirit is not mine. One ship I saw was dry-docked. She looked very awkwardly savage and out of place, and reminded me of some strong athlete on a bed of sickness.

In going from one dock to another we passed through the Blackwall Tunnel. Fine thing, is it not? Superb achievement of engineering. Since mechanical civilisation is the present pride of mankind, let us rejoice by all means in the Blackwall Tunnel. But I confess that my experience of it increased my annoyance that mere mechanical civilisation should pass for the real thing. The Blackwall Tunnel expedites traffic: that is its advantage to humanity. Its disadvantage is that any one who goes through

it twice a day must certainly be rendered deaf in a very short time, and will in all probability develop some frightful nervous disease of which he will die prematurely and in great agony. I never heard anything like its reverberating din, but I fancied I was in the thick of a battle between all the artillery of the world. At one point I perceived that the horrid crashing was growing louder and coming nearer—it seemed that a dozen express trains were bearing down on me. I looked wildly round for a ladder of escape—my guide gently pushed me on to the side pavement—a little cart with a very small pony went by. I came out of the Blackwall Tunnel with a splitting headache, trembling in every limb. A superb achievement of civilisation, a great contribution to the brightness and happiness of human life!

I can imagine few more cheerless fields of labour than the Docks in winter, at least on such a dull day as I saw them. A litter of wood and iron and packing-cases: on one side of you lines of dismal sheds and bare offices; on the other dirty water with a few sulky ships sitting in it. Outside, Father

Thames waits, a sleepy murderer. There is no protection between the edge of the Docks and the water except a painted white line. You must look out for that in time of fog: if you forget it, you will fall in and be drowned: men often die so—a fitting death, it seemed, to the life. It was the dinner-hour when I arrived, and the place was almost empty, bare, untended, forlorn. Afterwards a few gangs arrived, and got to shifting and hammering. Had I been one of those men, I should have resented a sight-seeing stranger in a comfortable greatcoat. Happily or otherwise, however, a rebellious view of the cosmos is not common, and I suppose they did not mind. I would have talked cheerily with them about their work, if I could; but I knew my questions would be stupid, and that I should feel myself an impertinence, and so forbore and confined myself to the man whose attentions I had bought. Some of these men seemed ill fed and were ill clad; I saw more in worse plight, as was natural, in the filthy streets hard by. Dirt in those streets everywhere—filthy steps, grimy windows. How could it be otherwise? And what sort of men and women can they be who

are born and bred in these surroundings? Kindly human virtues will flourish hardly, and no doubt those poor people have their share of them; no doubt in the sparse good times the native fun of the cockney will out. But when we are told that London families will not persist, we must reflect that in parts of London it is well. But what a comment on our philanthropy and humanitarianism and civilisation! The man who in the Middle Ages died prematurely as a retainer in some silly baronial feud had a better lot than this of physical and mental and moral decay.

Well, an examination of poverty is not in the bond, and I hate sermonising as much as you. Two practical remarks to finish. I know many people who might get a wiser perspective of themselves and their grievances and ambitions if they walked about the streets near the Docks and talked with a dock-hand out of work. And I noticed a big "Scandinavian Home"—the Scandinavians I saw, by the way, were not fair-haired giants, but rather swarthy and slight men—and I wondered if something of the kind could not be done for some of the Englishmen in the neighbourhood.

V

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IT was nearly twenty years since I had visited it, so that I may fairly claim to have gone there with a fresh eye and an open intelligence. That is to say, of course, so far as an actual impression is concerned. No one who is interested in politics can be an ignoramus generally about the House of Commons. He must be acquainted more or less with its machinery, and every now and then must consider a debate, reading perhaps one whole speech or so of the eminent, and the abbreviation of the rest mercifully provided by the newspapers. But you may do that for ever without really appreciating the actual atmosphere, tone and mutual attitudes of the House; and certainly one coming freshly to all that and taking nothing of it for granted should be able to throw some sort of

a light on the affair, flickering or dim it may be, for the ignorant or the familiar. But first I must ask you to listen to my preliminary discourse. We have lunched, let us say, somewhere about Piccadilly, and there is time as we walk to Westminster for some useful retrospect.

Some twenty years ago the House of Commons still held the eyes of England. It was still very actually the governing force in the country. How far the balance has really swerved, to what precise element in our polity, is a question in which I am too greatly interested for any random remarks which I should lack time, if not your attention, to explain. What is quite certain, and sufficient for our present occasion, is that men no longer look on the House of Commons with the keen attention and anxious expectation it once attracted. Yet there are interesting figures enough still playing with seriousness and gusto on this stage. But we are not excited about the House of Commons, and our minds follow these men into a direct relation with the country without pausing for long over that medium.

It was otherwise in my comparatively hot youth or boyhood twenty good years ago. For I do not think it was any morbidity or eccentricity in myself that aroused the enthusiastic interest I certainly felt. I am sure that in general conversation there was an even minute concern with proceedings in the House of Commons quite beyond anything one hears nowadays. Elderly men displayed a liveliness and heat about it they keep now for golf or bridge. They tore the papers open and pointed triumphantly to a passage in So-and-so's speech admitting this or denying that, and thumped the table. For my part I spent hours when I should have been doing Latin prose, or even (you will never forgive me!) when I should have been playing football, in reading whole debates, warming with the "hear hears" or derisively echoing the "oh! oh!s." And in those days there was no greater occasion for me than an occasional admission to the Strangers' or Speaker's gallery. I gloated over the bald heads below. Every nerve in me was tense when Mr. Gladstone answered an ordinary question—and truly his way of

doing it was extraordinarily impressive. It was a glorious happening when I heard Lord Randolph Churchill make a fighting speech: I was a fervid supporter of his, and I think too that the natural snobbishness of a public school boy made the "aristocratic insolence" with which he treated his Irish interrupters extremely delightful to me. And the next day I would verify the whole affair in the newspaper with a noble sense of importance in having myself been present. And now . . . But we are upon Palace Yard.

We walk through the Hall, and anticipation is stimulated when we see Fox confronting Pitt and the other Parliamentary heroes in effigy. We arrive at the outer lobby, where public-spirited but rather listless citizens are restrained by policemen from the penetralia. . . . I had been furnished with an order of admittance to the seats "under the gallery," the best in the House for contiguity: you are less substantially divided from the floor of the House than the pit of a theatre is from the stalls. And here I must hope that the member who gave it me will not feel as the host whose guest has

gone away to write in the papers of his entertainment. That destruction of social decency is one of the more obvious abominations of the age, and I should feel very sensitively the accusation that I am doing that sort of thing. I am doing it in a way, of course : I was there by courtesy. But I shall name no names, and . . . these fine feelings are an impertinence in your contemporary writer. I flourished my order at the policeman, and was allowed to enter the inner lobby. Members were standing about, some of them listening to intelligent constituents with a mechanical interest. An official at the end of the lobby took my order, and no consideration of delicacy shall prevent my complimenting him in public on his manner of doing it. He was himself the very perfect type of an official, in evening dress, and having an aquiline and slightly cynical face with whiskers to it. He took the order—the like of which he takes by the score every day—and looked at it with a mild surprise, as at some inoffensive but novel object. He raised his eyebrows, held it nearer, finally took out a pair of pince-nez and slowly adjusted them.

Then he read it deliberately, and looked up at me with a reassuring smile. All was well: I should not be fined or imprisoned. There, in brief, was the essential character of the genial official: he might make you an outcast from your fellow-citizens; instead of which he is polite and considerate, and you feel immeasurably grateful. He pointed to a little staircase, which I ascended and was actually, though not technically, in the House, on a level with the members except for the convenient ascent of the benches.

I had carefully chosen an ordinary day, to take the House of Commons at its normal, and not to be disturbed in my impression by my own interests and prejudices. It was an Irish amendment to the Address in reply to the King's Speech, the course and result of which were alike known. So, indeed, are the course and result of everything else in this assembly; but there are times when one's interest in the speeches induces the illusion that they really have some effect. This was not such a time: it was bare and obvious routine.

I sat close to the Irish Nationalist benches. They, of course, were crowded. There was one man on the front Opposition bench : on the other Liberal benches another man. On the Treasury bench sat of course the Chief Secretary for Ireland, patient and attentive, not alarmed. Occasionally a colleague came and spoke to him. On the rest of the Conservative benches two men. That was one's first impression : a few benches closely packed, the rest of them empty ; and it pointed the contemporary character of the House of Commons—a registering machine, where the hands work in their sections and go off duty when they are not immediately wanted. The proposer of the amendment commenced his speech. He went as near to reading it as the custom of the House allowed. He had no gift of elocution, no instinctive or artful gesture, no modulation of tones, almost no emphasis at all. At intervals the words "in my judgment" came out with comparative cheerfulness and force : it sounded conceited, but was merely the inartistic management of a point ; the gentleman's demeanour was almost labori-

ously modest. After ten minutes of this I looked about me again. The place looks smaller, more social, less assuming than you would suppose if you were never there. But it has a dignity of construction and circumstance. The wood panelling, the decent green of the benches, the wigs of the Speaker and the clerks. . . . But—no—again and again I looked at it, and each time the effect of the whole was spoiled by it: there is an absurd, irrelevant, truncated green canopy over the Speaker's head, which catches one's eye persistently until one's arm longs to hack it off. It is an ugly excrescence on the Speaker's spacious and comely chair, a common candle-shade over a large chased silver candlestick, a patch of green plaster on a fine large-featured face. It is a paltry, mean object, and the most prominent in all the House. Again and again, as I tried to remember emotionally that, though the man on his legs was halting and ineffective, still here was the Mother of Parliaments, a great and glorious survival, the centre of innumerable associations with our history—again and again this preposterous green canopy

dominated everything. It was a symbol of business, as business is too often understood, something of its nature exclusive of beauty and dignity and seemliness. It was as though this place, conscious that it was no longer useful, was determined, in the teeth of architect and designer, that ornamental it should not be.

If my fancies rambled, the interminable proposer of the amendment was the cause. More than a stricken hour did he dodder on his way. Every now and then came cheers, sparse "hear hears" merging at times, as they came more thickly, into "year-year-years," but they were perfunctory. The Chief Secretary took notes, no doubt for a practical purpose, but with a suggestion to me of compassionate courtesy. At length the proposer finished, the "year-year-years" came in a burst—and then half the scanty audience went out. Here was another odd evidence of the mere machine. The seconder of the amendment was a far better speaker than the other; he had some effectively picturesque illustrations at his command; but because it

was a duty to the party to support the mover, but less incumbent on them to support the seconder, the latter had but half the audience. After him came a really practised debater, with the Parliamentary arts ready to his hands and voice, and though what he said interested me little (the substance being well known to me) I listened with the ease one attends to an artist withal. The Nationalist members returned, and even a few Unionists loafed in. I use the word, because that is the effect of the hat routine in the House of Commons. A member comes in bareheaded, bows to the Speaker if he passes opposite the chair, sits down, and then as a rule puts on his hat. The effect is one of negligence, as though he thought anything was good enough for the confounded place. That is of course an accident from the differing hat customs of our ancestors, who wore them everywhere and whose removing them was a sign of great deference, and ourselves who always take them off indoors. One observes the same effect in those London clubs where hat wearing is a tradition : to see a man in a dignified dining-room, lined with old por-

traits, eating with his hat on always strikes one's eye if one does not see it habitually. You may still carry your hat into a drawing-room when you "call" in the afternoon, and a little while since carried your opera hat shut up into an evening party: it is an odd and (to me) an agreeable fact that these customs change so slowly.

But I digress. . . . With this new speaker, who attracted and replied to objections, I was aware of a new impression. The atmosphere of the House is quite different from that aloofness you would infer from the reports. Sometimes, even in the newspapers, when there has been a quick interchange between prominent men literally reported, you perceive something of it. But even from those incidents you do not gather how informal in manner (when men are really interested) the debates are. The "oh, oh's" one reads appear merely as colourless symbols of disagreement. More often they are really "*oh . . . oh's*" with an interval between them, and with a genuine accent of protest. For example, the speaker in question said—no matter what. The Irish leader, who

disagreed in a friendly way, said "*oh!*" smiling. "No?" returned the man on his legs. The Irish leader, without rising, interjected his version in a short sentence. "Ah, well," replied the other, "but I must say what I believe, you know." It seems to me that such a conversational atmosphere is one of the best facts about the English Parliament, where it is very unusual for men to lose their tempers, and where the ready belief in good intentions keeps up for the most part a tone of personal friendliness. It does not go so far as to render the proceedings (though I have admitted that I think their importance may be exaggerated) merely academical: if a practical effect is not directly produced, at least practical life is directly reflected: it is merely the sanity and sense of order which happily distinguish us in public life, and beyond that the sense of solidity, of the essential likeness between us, in spite of all our inconvenient nonsense of classes.

Well—I need not go on. My impressions were repeated. An impression, first of all, of a proceeding absolutely mechanical and per-

functory, not valued or valuable for itself, recognised as a thing just worth while to be kept going. And then, as spirit and life were infused into it, the proceeding became a mildly interested and essentially friendly colloquy, in spite of the subject, which was beset by traditional denunciations. My honourable friend must allow me to say . . . The right honourable gentleman, whose abilities no one recognises more freely than I, is mistaken in supposing . . . The honourable and learned gentleman, whose attitude on this question is very natural. . . . We are all very good fellows. That, I think, is the usual atmosphere, when nothing very exciting is toward, and no pronouncement which could thrill the country is possible. Nine-tenths of the affair repetition and waste of time. But a tone which does credit to us all.

VI

MY SPECTACLES

THE man of taste is commonly unwilling to write about his personal and private experiences. Poets, to be sure, are an exception, and we are glad to accept the result, though sometimes a slight surprise may mingle with our admiration as they reveal their intimacies. But to set down in plain prose one's sensations in love and bereavement would be monstrous (it has been done), and must bring overwhelming discomfort upon the sensitive reader. Even the minor accidents of private life are felt by the man of taste to be no subject for his pen, to be at once a prodigality of himself and an intrusion on the public. His friends have not this feeling, and are constantly urging him to "make an article" of some pleasant event, an excursion or what not, but (when the man of taste is concerned) without

success. So, I feel that it is no business of the public that I am short of sight, and that I have lately been fitted with spectacles which enable me to see like other men; and I feel, moreover, that the public might be apt to agree.

Nevertheless I shall break the rule. The affair does not, after all, touch the secrets of my heart: I am full of it,[1] and it will be interesting, I am convinced, to other people. It is not as though a blind man had been made to see, but it is something in that way.

I had been conscious of short sight almost as long as I can remember, but in the last ten years or so my sight had become much shorter. But I did not know how bad it was—how far inferior to the sight of ordinary men. I increased the strength of a single eyeglass I wore, and imagined that when I wore it I saw pretty well. Constitutionally averse from doing anything definite, I postponed and postponed an interview with an oculist. Eventually, however, I saw one (I wish a man of taste might advertise him), who prescribed spectacles

[1] I suppose I was. But alas! my spectacles are become a commonplace to me now. Two years, Postumus.

which, he told me, would bring my sight very near the normal. And ever since I have had those spectacles I have been aware of thronging new sensations and experiences. Intellectually, æsthetically, socially, the world—and not the visible world alone—is changed to me. I see definite objects where I saw nothing, I see faces where before I merely inferred that faces were, I see expressions where before I saw only faces. The comparative effect of all this should be interesting, I believe: if it merely tells the lucky-sighted how much they score, or send the unlucky and neglectful to the oculists, it is worth the writing. One thing I must premise. It is all literal and true, not metaphorical. By spectacles I mean spectacles, not philosophy nor religion of any sort, old or new. It is as well to say it: the subtle are so easily misled.

I will take the broader effects first. In my walks abroad in the country I like to think as my eye suggests: I dislike ruminating over life, I avoid trying to solve my private troubles, and I refuse altogether to make schemes for work. Consequently, when my vision was so

limited and blurred as it was, I was often bored for want of mental incitement, I was driven upon what a prig of my acquaintance used to call "my own thoughts." There might be nothing round me but a bare plain, or the slope of a hill, which is all very well for a mystic, but little good for a matter-of-fact intelligence : the æsthetic emotion excited or the vague mood suggested cannot—I challenge any candid person to deny it—pleasurably last. But now I see many small objects I should have missed, and see many larger ones—houses, flocks of sheep or the like—long before I should once have seen them. There, clearly, is an intellectual gain. But of course there is also a loss. Dimness of sight was a better minister to one's mood when one was for romance ; it was for certain scenes a more gracious introduction. The world now looks plainer and brighter, but somehow not quite so natural, something painted, a picture under glass. It invites to a readier criticism, less easily to dreams. But if all our gains were unqualified, life would be all self-reproach.

A similar loss and gain holds of faces : I

mean the faces of people I pass in the street or see in other public places. They used to be simply faces; at a distance merely tokens for that part of the human body; nearer seen, they were objects with eyes and noses. If the general presence suggested an acquaintance, I put my single glass in my eye and with increasing inaccuracy came to a decision: otherwise there was no chance of interest. Now I am aware of a definite type at some distance, and when the face passes me I see it in all its peculiarities of fashioning and life. Another intellectual gain and a large one. At first speculation ran riot, and I was never dull. I have not so far, it is true, seen a large number of fervid ambitions, intense enthusiasms, rapt passions of love and despair, patent on human faces. But I find it interesting yet to note the obvious signs—or so one thinks them—of ordinary characteristics: anxiety, greed, benevolence, sulkiness, intolerance, servility. Children—they especially delight me. Of old I appreciated those I knew, and caressed, and saw close: the others I thought vaguely charming little animals. But now I see and

marvel at the range of expressiveness in nearly all children—their wonder, amusement, curiosity, furtive appeals to one's sympathy, conscious appeals—how wonderful that is when one passes in a moment and will never see them again!—to one's interest and almost to one's affection. I am bound to say that it is amusement I personally most excite in them. For some reason or other children find something diverting in my appearance or my carriage; they nearly always smile at me, and when I smile back they laugh outright. That reassures me. When children of my private acquaintance used to laugh at me before I said a word, I used to fear that their parents might have told them I was a funny man. (I am not, but ever since I fell off an omnibus in the early 'nineties, certain of my friends have thought so.) Now I perceive that to a child's eye there is something really comical about me, and "Courage!" I say to myself, "we have our uses. . . ."

But this is one side only. Except for the children, whose beauties are more evident, I lose æsthetically by this clear envisaging of

faces. Well, I have said it: I meant to hint it only. But, reader, in your ear: we ourselves are handsome creatures, and there is no one by to overhear and take it to himself. You have always been clear-sighted: tell me, has it ever struck you how very ugly most people are? I have been astonished. I used to take it for granted, with an optimism I am proud to remember, that the average man I passed was more or less inoffensive, the average woman more or less comely. And now! I was quite unprepared. My friends are all exceptionally beautiful, and the pictures of people in the illustrated papers are presumably doctored. It is rather heartbreaking. I see some one coming towards me in the distance, and lo! thinks I, a fine, pleasant-looking man, or a quite attractive woman, as the case may be. And then he or she comes up, and I see the features distinctly, the colouring, and so forth. . . . Are our women really the most beautiful in Europe? Since the advent of my spectacles I have had no means for a fair comparison. . . . But all this is little to set against the gain of interest.

I come to social changes. The first is the probability that I shall be much more popular than in the past. My single eyeglass and very short sight gave between them innumerable offences. Why anybody should be worse annoyed by one glass than by two I do not know, but the fact is notorious. I have often noticed an angry scowl as I stuck my one glass in my eye, as though the intention to see my interlocutor more plainly were an insult to him. I gather from novels that forty years ago, or so, the single eyeglass was used as a kind of offensive weapon. It was the mark in Ripton Thompson's mind of the aristocrat, and so of course, if Mr. Meredith was right, quickly became the assumption of the pseudo-aristocrat. The heavy swell in *Caste* wears it traditionally. But that use of it surely ceased many years ago, and it was rather hard to be thought an imbecile and anachronistical impostor. The offence given by one's short sight was even more foolish. If I did not see a new acquaintance quite close, or saw him only for a few minutes, I was apt to forget his face when next we met. It is almost inconceivable that

any man should be fool enough to think this forgetfulness due not to a very common physical imperfection, but to a piece of silly and gratuitous rudeness. Yet so it was. I have more than once been told that some idiot accused me of having "cut" him, and I was rendered so nervous by the mistake that over and over again I accosted complete strangers on the off-chance of their being sensitive and stupid acquaintances. This offence will now pass. I shall fix the faces of new acquaintances on my mind, and insist on their recognising *me*, for a change.

That is an advantage, but one not so great as the increased fulness and animation of social intercourse. I can now see the expressions of my friends across a dinner-table, and so on: I can see if the gaiety of their words is belied by the weariness of their eyes: I can see if their pessimism is real or the mere naughtiness of repletion; I can see the irrepressible faint smile, the quickly banished moisture of the eyes. I shall be a shrewd observer.

The thought occurs to me that Frenchmen must have better sight than Englishmen.

When a man describes a character in a book of fiction, unless he be describing an actual intimate acquaintance—which I hope is not often done—he sees the character with the vision he has for the casual face. Have you never observed that, whereas in English fiction you get faces and sizes in a general way, a long nose, sparkling eyes, a manly expression and the like, in French you get so often very much more? You get the quality of the skin, the exact degree of puffiness under the eyes, the warts on the chin, the pimples on the cheek. I have a fancy that the average Frenchman sees all this in real life more commonly than the Englishman, and therefore writes of it; and I offer the fancy as the subject of a critical article.

The brief digression does not mean that my subject is exhausted. But it is well to set a term to one's smaller egotisms, and I doubt this one has run away with my pen, and I may have been mistaken in its interest for others. Neither short sight nor spectacles is an uncommon thing. But these rough heads of discourse may suggest their own reminiscences

to my readers, or their own good fortune: the perfect in sight may read them with an agreeable superiority.

I record in conclusion that I find the world worth seeing clearly. There was produced a little while ago a play by M. Clemenceau—which of our famous politicians is likely to write a play?—a play half metaphorical, no doubt, in which a blind Chinaman, restored to sight, finds, in place of the kindly and affectionate relations and friends he thought were round him, knaves and hypocrites who humoured him for their purposes. He decides that it is wicked magic, and that he will go blind again. So would not I.

VII

A QUESTION OF WOMEN

"Je me rappelai heureusement une maxime de feu mon grand-père, qui avait coutume de dire que tout est permis aux dames, et que tout ce qui vient d'elles est grâce et faveur."—M. SILVESTRE BONNARD.

A LITTLE while ago there was a case reported in the newspapers in which the author of a book about women prosecuted a critic thereof. The extracts from it given in the papers did not encourage me (if I may say it without a legal risk) to read the book in question, and I am, therefore, ignorant if it contained any reasoned considerations of women's position in contemporary society, or if (as the extracts suggested) it was a merely violent denunciation. To attack a whole sex, save perhaps in an epigram or so, is an obviously foolish proceeding, impossible to any one who has the slightest interest in social history and problems. On the other

hand, the smug gallantries which are still employed by a certain sort of writers when they speak of women generally, are also irrelevant to the facts of modern life. I have quoted, however, a general compliment, too naïve and kindly to offend the most determined woman, at the head of this essay, to indicate that my own mental attitude to women is all that there is of the most deferential, chivalrous, and even romantic. I indicate this fact because the task I have set myself might suggest to a thoughtless reader an idea that I have some vulgar and stupid wish to say disagreeable things. We have all heard a good deal about the unsatisfied aspirations of women and the unfair limitations imposed upon them. But I have come across, also, a good deal of floating discontent on the part of men, from their own point of view, with the condition of women, and the case I have referred to has suggested to me that I might attempt to give some rational account of this discontent, to investigate its causes, to estimate its worth, and to set forth the probable solution of the matter in the progress of contemporary civilisation. It is clearly convenient, therefore,

that I should be able to disclaim any personal reason for showing this discontent; that I should be able to examine it as an impartial philosopher. The discontent means, of course, that, in the opinion of the discontented, women are given unfair advantages in life. Personally, I do not suffer by them; as a philosopher, then, I can examine and explain them impartially; as a man I can make an old-fashioned bow and assure society that it has my permission to give as many unfair advantages to women (at the expense of other men) as it chooses.

It has been alleged—if publicly, I know not; frequently to me in private—that over large sections of the community women have an illogical combination of chances. That on the one hand they claim and are acquiring equal opportunities with men in the work-a-day world, and on the other claim and are given the right to be supported in idleness, in mere pleasure-seeking or the exercise of intellectual or artistic tastes, by the work of men. So that large numbers of men are at this disadvantage, that they have to work both for their own sub-

sistence and that of an idle person, or idle persons, as well, and are at the same time exposed to the competition of women who have the spring-board of private security at the expense of other men's work. Sometimes I have heard a complaint of a simpler nature, namely, that it is unfair to many a man that he should have to work so hard that neither time nor energy is left him for the intellectual or æsthetic life while he supports in comfortable idleness, or in the pursuit of agreeable studies, a woman who contributes practically nothing to the domestic economy. The former complaint is sometimes reasonable for an individual case, but logically pushed is inconsistent with itself. The latter complaint is heard less frequently, because it offends traditional sentiment and appears unmanly, but the basis for it in life occurs more often. It is the former, more complicated position which has given point to the whole matter, and the man who makes the simpler complaint finds courage—if he does and if you call it courage—to do so because of this female competition, though it may not affect himself. But there are two courses at

work, the movement towards the economic independence of women, and the abolition, due to modern improvements and facilities of material life, of the domestic work which was once performed by them and was economically the counterpart of the outside work done by the men. It is in this cause that the genuine basis of complaint lies, and the remedy for the grievance (if grievance there be) is precisely in the economic independence of women which at present stimulates the complaint. These are elementary considerations, no doubt, and are very far from being novel. I mention them to show the point of view from which I propose to discuss the men's disadvantages. A more profitable discussion, it is probable, would begin much deeper, in that still obscure division of biology or physiology which is barbarously called sexualogy, but had I the necessary science, this is not the place for such an incursion. I confine myself to some incidents which attend the present stages of our social progress, believing that even a superficial observation of them may not be without its suggestions. And since the matter is first of all

economical, it may be useful to make our divisions according to the uppermost fact in modern life—income.

There can be no fair grievance of the sort which forms my subject among the "idle rich." A rich and idle man may think he supports his wife, but, economically, the community supports them both. Moreover, the objects for which a community supports rich and idle people—the benefit and delight derived by it from their encouragement of art and science, the excellence of their morals, and the charm of their manners—are served even better by the women than the men. Nor can the very rich man who makes his riches complain. If, unhappily, his wife is a mere luxury or ornament in his life, it is one he can well afford. It is when you come to the moderately rich man of commerce or a profession—let us say with two or three thousand pounds a year—that a case for a grievance here and there, very exceptional, may be set up. Let me observe that in this, as in all other divisions, I have nothing to do with the ordinary cases of life, the cases in which every one concerned is content, when the

man thinks it a privilege to do his utmost for the comfort of his wife, and she makes him a thousandfold return, and so forth. I am concerned only with the discontented men, the exceptions. Very well. In this condition of life the sumptuary customs of England may make it natural that a woman should insist on her husband working to the utmost limit of his powers to provide her with this, that, and the other, and the husband may be unable to resist the pressure of his wife, her family, their friends, and traditions. In the result, you have a man working beyond the possibility of enjoying the intellect, the art, or even the sports of his day. And the woman? The management of her house and the care of her children take up all her time? But do they, in modern conditions? They may, no doubt, and perhaps they should. The care of children may fitly occupy the whole of a woman's time. But as a rule, in such a household as I indicate, the succession of nurses and nursery-governesses, and afterwards of schools or tutors, relieves the mother of all educative work; and the children themselves being occupied with their games

and lessons, it is likely that the time devoted to them by the mother, by reason of simple affection, will not exceed an hour or so a day. It is possible that there are no children; when there are, we all observe that the families of the well-to-do are, on the average, smaller than they were wont to be. As to the management of the house, where all the manual work is done by others, and everything, except for the cooking of food, is bought ready-made, it is neither necessary nor desirable that the supervision should be a lengthy task—want of intelligence and method would be implied. At least, we all know women whose houses are perfectly ordered and comfortable, and who can spare many hours a day for extra domestic concerns. We have, then—in these few cases of grievances—an overworked man and a woman with most of her time free for pleasure or "self-improvement." In either case the man may complain with a show of fairness that he is at a disadvantage; he also may have a taste for pleasure, or he also may wish to improve his mind and artistic perceptions. It may happen that he, at the start of equal gifts

and attainments with his wife, may fall so far behind her for want of opportunity that his society becomes uninteresting to her. Another man's society may be more agreeable. Perhaps the other man is "my ancient friend, Don Juan." And all the while the husband works for an unreasonable number of hours a day and pays for everything. I confess that when he complains I am touched. You see, when the average woman, even at this level of life, was more or less a household drudge and his confessed inferior, he had some return, in vanity, if in nothing else. But now that out of his own dull exertions in her behalf she makes herself his superior in many ways (possibly even at golf!), and at least claims an equality all round, his case may move a compassionate heart.

The grievances—or the basis for grievances—grow in number as we gradually reach a lower income, since there is even less of the domestic supervision and the social activities which are partially for the man's advantage also. I cannot be minutely accurate in figures, but I am now contemplating a division of

society where, roughly to put it, marriage is not indulged in without an income of from five hundred to a thousand pounds a year. (Happily, English society is not rigidly divided by income, but my subject compels me to keep to it; the reader will imagine all the qualifications.) Here, by the way, as in the other division, there mingles in the society a number of men too poor to marry, and I am reminded that I have heard complaints from them in regard to the unfair advantages, not of wives, but of female relations. Both sorts may be set forth by an example, as clearly as by general statement, and perhaps less dully. I take some old friends of mine, the Brown family. Colonel Brown had a small private income in addition to his half-pay, and lived in Sussex. He had two sons and two daughters, between the eldest and youngest of whom the difference in age was only five years. I will call them, for convenience, the Browni and Brownae. The complaint made to me came from Brownus major, and was as follows. He was sent to a public school and a university, so that up to the age of twenty-three his education was more

expensive than that of the Brownae; but, on the other hand, he got less good from it, since they acquired some knowledge of foreign languages and some artistic accomplishments, while he was taught nothing at all. At twenty-three he was sent into a bank, and his salary of £80 a year was supplemented by a very small allowance from the Colonel, who considered that it was time Brownus major made his own living. He dwelt in small and uncomfortable lodgings; his food had to be of the simplest sort, and sometimes, when he was out of pocket, was hardly sufficient; he had a good deal of anxiety about paying his way; his hours of work were long; he had few friends; and amusements which cost money he could enjoy but seldom. Meanwhile, the Brownae lived on in Sussex with their parents. They had absolute security, a pleasant table, a comfortable allowance for dress and pocket-money, and no necessity to work. As a matter of fact, they passed their time in a round of simple enjoyments—hockey, golf, lawn tennis, dinners, "small dances," theatricals, the agreeable society of the district. This state of affairs

continued for some years, and I confess that at the end of them it did seem as though the sisters had had the best of it. They were brimming with health and life and good spirits; Brownus major looked tired and pale and discontented. I think they rather despised him for having ceased to be their equal in games. Neither was a clever girl, but their wits, not having been confined to rows of figures many hours a day, were brighter and fresher than his. It is, of course, a very tenable position that this was all for the best, even as a type, if the next generation depends mostly on the mothers. As a matter of fact, only one, Browna minor, married—a rich man, so that comfort and, if she likes, idleness are secured to her. The Colonel is dead now, and his half-pay terminated. Mrs. Brown and Browna major live on the small private income, in a smaller house, but much in the same way, with plenty of amusement and no work for Browna major. Brownus major toils on in his bank, and has reached a salary of £140 a year. For three weeks in the year he can share in his sister's pleasures. I glance for a moment at

Brownus minor. He was a brighter boy, and gained a place in a public office. To this he gradually added the labour of writing for magazines, and now, by working on an average for ten hours a day, is enabled to support a wife in considerable comfort. Her luncheon parties, at which he, of course, cannot be present, are popular. I have never heard him complain, and have no doubt that he thoroughly enjoys the situation. I mention his case merely because Brownus major, who is rather a crude misogynist, adduces it as another injustice to men. For his own case, however, I think there is something to be said.

We may now pass to a range of life in which it is a question for a wife how much, if any, of the actual housework she shall do. Let us suppose a five-roomed cottage—a kitchen, a parlour, and three other rooms—and a husband making £200 a year, the income of a lucky clerk or of a highly-skilled workman. The housework can be done easily by a wife in average health, and leave her a reasonable leisure. If her husband is a skilled workman it is almost a certainty that she will do it, and

if he has any grievance at all it is that in the widespread ignorance of domestic arts in this country the work will probably be ill done. That is hardly the wife's fault, as an individual woman; and I have sometimes thought that it would be well if some of the energy devoted to the teaching of Christian theology to unwilling Orientals could be directed to the salvation of lower middle-class digestions at home. In any case the wife will do less work than of old, since so much that was made at home is now bought ready-made. But shall she keep a servant? As I said, if she is the wife of a skilled artisan, she will not, following the fashion of her class. And here, by the way, is the great advantage in life of the mechanical engineering folk, a comparatively new class among us, who, if successful, make more money than the sum I have mentioned, but have few silly "appearances" to support, and spend their earnings in real pleasures. But if her husband is a clerk she will very likely want a servant, for the sake of appearances. When she makes up for the expense by work of her own he can have no complaint.

I know of one instance in which a woman prefers to work all day at ill-paid needlework to doing the simple work of such a *ménage;* it seems idiotic to me, but there is no economical grievance for the man. But if he has to work longer hours and deny himself the cheapest pleasures for the sake of a servant? Well, then, sentiment and manliness will most often keep him from complaint; but if he does complain, I am inclined to lend him my ear.

In all these cases other than economical causes operate, varying strength of wills, selfishness, uxoriousness, many things. Also, I am far from denying that very often there is a quite opposite grievance: there are the Robinsons as well as the Browns, for example, the Robinson family in which the girls have been systematically sacrificed to the boys, the reasonable chances of life denied them for their brothers' benefit. But, from the economical point of view, it appears that scattered over our society there are cases where women have unfair advantages, and where, if the men are not compensated for these, or rendered blind to

them by other considerations, they may have ground for complaint.

When we reach the level in which the housework must be done by the wife, or female relations, the ground for discontent comes to an end (as it ends at the other extreme in the idle rich); all the more, because here we find most commonly the women earning outside wages as well. At this point, therefore, we may consider the other ground of complaint, female competition. It is, as I have said, inconsistent with the simple complaint, but it gives point to it, because the increasing activity of women outside their homes forces on the discontented man the fact that, though economically he is supporting a dependant, otherwise he is supporting a person who claims equal freedom of will and general independence with himself.

I have suggested that this very female competition, this step towards economic independence of women, is a possible remedy for such grievances as I have mentioned. I do not say it is the only one, or that it is an obviously advisable course. It is beyond the

range of my subject to go deeply into that, and it is useless to go into it superficially. I may, however, venture on a few remarks round about it. There is a good deal of feeling against women working at all. While writing these pages I have read an article in a daily paper by Mrs. Craigie, in which she, an exceptionally gifted observer and student of life, and, by the way, herself an indefatigable worker, protests against women doing any work, and urges on fathers their duty to provide dowries for their daughters. Of course, if it is proved to be good for the race that women should be without professional work, not only for a comparatively short time before and after childbirth, but all their lives, there is no more to be said. But what Mrs. Craigie and other objectors really mean (as it seems to me) is not work, but overwork. She speaks of a woman "who does far more than a man for far less pay, goes home to a sloppy meal she is too weary to eat, and a lonely evening too sad to be described." These evils are not due to the mere fact of her working: they are due to an ill-regulated

labour-market, and the want of provision for cheap and rational amusement. Partly they are due to the failure of women, so far, to combine as men combine in labour unions. But overwork is bad for men also; most of the men who work in this country work too much; that is to say, too little time and energy are left them for life and education. Suppose a man who works ten hours a day, and a wife whose home duties consume one hour; would it not be well if he could work less and she more? Where is the economic necessity that if she work at all, she must work as hard as he, and for insufficient pay? Is human intelligence really unequal to the problem?

I will not alarm my readers by preaching any crude socialism. Dr. Karl Pearson, whose works fed the socialistic aspirations of my youth, sees in the desire of women for economic independence an argument for socialism of a very sweeping sort. My view is more practical now, and I find a moderate and cautious exercise of State-control in labour a very practicable ingredient in my general politics. The interference of the State with a crude capitalist

system has proceeded far since the days when the successful pupils of the Manchester School were allowed to work children to death, and will proceed further yet. Because a woman may not be able to work for so many hours as a man, or because there are periods when she cannot work at all, is no reason why she cannot work. We have a large number of women among us who either have no domestic duties, or whose domestic duties, which modern facilities have so greatly reduced, are very light. Many of them clamour for chances to work, and my exceptional complaining men, at least, are absurd to resist that clamour. If the Brownae had had some paying employment, the lot of Brownus major had not been so hard. As for ill effects on men's chances for work from female competition, that, again, is an affair of a rightly regulated labour market, an ideal, perhaps, not perfectly to be attained, but not impossible to approach. I think the only men who need absolutely suffer are the writers of contemporary fiction, which is almost exclusively read by women, since their public would be at less frequent leisure.

I have confined myself in this paper to England. I should have spoken of America if I had more direct knowledge of its social life. Americans with whom I have conversed, however, seem to accept it as an inevitable rule of life that men must work and women must enjoy themselves. That I observe of the well-to-do; the working women in American factories seem to need protection even more than their sisters in England. In any case, I should have confined myself to the "Anglo-Saxon" world. A fanciful thinker might say that the Teutonic race—the Teuton as an element in our origin—as distinct from Latins and Celts, is working out a new attitude to women, a new position for them in civilisation. Another might point to Germany and smile, to be answered that German social civilisation is backward, but on our own road. Who knows? The old attitude to woman as an angel or a "plaything" is so implicit in the romance and colour of our life, that middle-aged men, like the writer, may sigh, contemplating a new horizon, for romance and colour lost. But that is a feeble thought. There is no true war be-

tween independence and romance. It may even be that the grandfather of M. Silvestre Bonnard, could he live again some hundreds of years hence, might make his remark with no suggestion of irony. For my part, I repeat it with a reverence.

VIII

PETTICOAT LANE

THEY told me it was the most curiously exotic scene in London. I should hardly see an English face, or hear the English tongue. An Oriental scene: everywhere swarthy Eastern faces, with lustrous black eyes, everywhere a babble of Yiddish. I should see women with bright-hued shawls for hats, and men in gabardines. The names over the shops would be in Hebrew. Well . . . they exaggerated, as they always do. Sunday morning in Petticoat Lane is not all this. I should not have believed them at all, indeed, if their account had not been partially supported by Mr. Zangwill in his *Children of the Ghetto*, to my mind one of the most interesting, even fascinating, books written in our days. Were I an autocrat, Mr. Zangwill should publish nothing that did not concern his race,

for when he writes on other themes he is equalled by Brown and Jones and surpassed by Robinson, but when he writes of Jews he has a genius of divination and presentment, and is a rich mine of knowledge about a fact of human history than which few stranger or more vital are known to us. His description of the Sunday Fair in Petticoat Lane was in my mind as I listened to my friends, and wondered why I had never been there before—with that stupid wonder of us Londoners when we hear tell of the sights to be seen in our own city. When I came back I looked up the passage, and remembered that it referred to a previous generation. Neither with him nor with my friends, however, was I angry. If Petticoat Lane is not what it was, it is still extremely interesting. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and some time when the mood for a vigorous drama is on me I shall enjoy it again.

In one respect I knew that I should not be disappointed: Oriental or not, the place would be full of Jews, and Jews of a sort with which I was not very familiar. The race is a subject which interests me intensely, but

about which I speak or write with diffidence, knowing how sensitive Jews are to observation, even in England where they have nothing to fear from it, and how apt to suspect an observer of some ridiculous attitude, if not of hostility, then of patronage. The baser sort, of course, especially of those whom you find mixed up with our well-to-do middle classes, are anxious to conceal their race, and are insulted if you refer to it. It is an absurd, as well as an unworthy procedure, because no amount of Scotch nomenclature imposes on the Gentiles, and they are always despised for their pains. It is a procedure deplored by their self-respecting brethren, as I happen to know. A little essay I wrote in all good faith on this phenomenon—still amazing and confounding to me in the light of the heroic faithfulness of the race through so many centuries—a little essay I published brought me some bitter letters from Jews who thought themselves aggrieved, but, I am glad to remember, the approval of some who had the best right to speak for their brethren. I refer to this because, coming now upon a subject which

compels me to write something of Jews as Jews, I would say at the outset that if I claim the right of a cat to look at a king, I exercise it with the friendliest feelings.

To resume. Many Jewish artists had I seen and admired, some known and liked. I had met and appreciated Jews of intellectual pursuits. Mere successful money-makers of no race appeal to me very much; they are apt to be rather limited in their sympathies; I do not know that the Jewish are more so than others—perhaps, indeed, they are less, having often a *savoir-vivre* and good-humour which the Saxon money-maker sometimes wants. Such Jews also I had known. But I had never, before the other Sunday, observed the chrysalis Jew of the East End. Let me say at once that in so far as he is represented by the energetic gentlemen who shout their goods in Petticoat Lane he is a treat.

The first thing that strikes an ignoramus about Petticoat Lane is its propinquity to the London he knows already. A penny 'bus from Cornhill, and you are there. I asked the 'bus conductor if he passed Petticoat Lane, and

he looked at me with a rebuking stare, as might the butler of some new-made knight if you asked for Mr. Smith. It seems that Petticoat Lane is called Middlesex Street. Why any one should prefer such a stupid and colourless name to one with such agreeable associations (come, come, reader: you are not such a prude as all that!) I do not know. Happily there was no doubt when we arrived at Middlesex Street that it was the Lane and no other. A murmur of thousands, with the roar of hundreds rising hoarsely above it, "tuppence" the master-word. (I also call it tuppence, as do other decent Englishmen, but I have noticed that the ridiculously refined reader expects the absurdly contemptuous spelling.) The Lane was crowded, but not so densely at that hour, eleven or so, as it became. Lines of open shops at the sides, two lines of stalls against the edge of the pavements, in the middle way and along the pavements a sauntering, dark-clad crowd. Here and there, as you looked down the lines, a man standing on his stall, shouting, gesticulating. But let me disengage my impressions.

First we will fold our illusions up and lay them aside. The scene was not Oriental. True that almost all the sellers were Jews; but they were like other English Jews, and were shouting English. One active and voluble merchant recommended himself as "the only Irish Jew in the Lane." Most of the names I noticed over the shops were English-Jew—Marks, Davis, and so on. I have seen more foreign-Jew names on the boxes at the Opera. And if nearly all the sellers were Jews, I think that quite a majority of the buyers and spectators were English. A good many, I imagine, came from about the Docks. There were tall, broad-shouldered young men, carrying themselves easily, blond and lithe, an excellent type of British labourer. Men were in a large majority, but I saw a few women, too, who were unmistakably English. I fancy that the Fair, like Agamemnon's bones, is a show, and that people come from the neighbourhood for an entertaining stroll in it, as Mayfair (with far less amusement) turns into Hyde Park on a fine Sunday morning. Again (I speak of the general impression) the literal colour

I had been led to expect was not there. Dark and dingy was the garb everywhere. There were exceptions, but I will come to them in the particular. I heard some mumbled jargon which might have been Yiddish among the sauntering crowds—never among the sellers, as I said. In spite of that I had an idea that in the main the sellers were Jews, the buyers Gentiles, an order of things which somehow seems very credible. The Jews had the trade, and the Gentiles came to spend their wages—that was my idea. One has remarked the same thing elsewhere.

If pleasant illusions went, however, so also did bad anticipations. I had been told to be careful of my watch; it was even suggested that I might be "gone over." That was nonsense. My friends the police were there in considerable force, to begin with, and I saw no rough element at all: cause and effect, it is likely, but let Petticoat Lane have its credit. Again, there was no squalor at all. Remarkably well nourished, these Jew merchants, buxom their ladies, happy and sleek their children. The British labourers, too, had the

proper brawny air, as they shouldered their way with good-humoured interest. One must look for misery elsewhere. Nor was the crowd ——well, we know how some crowds affect one of our senses. Towards the end of my stay, when it was very dense, the air was a little thick or so, but reasonably clean was the average. I take it that your destitute Jew alien bears dirt when he cannot help it, but that when he has worked his way to the possibility he changes his garb (which is the chief thing) with decent frequency. Now let me go to particulars.

I walked slowly down the Lane in the middle. On both sides active and persistent shouting of goods. Clothes and all sorts of millinery, hats, boots, etc.—by the way, there was a stall of the most elegant and highly polished boots I ever saw in my life—were the staple merchandise on the stalls, but there was a curiously varied assortment of miscellanies as well. Things you would have supposed their owners would have thrown away—the refuse of deserted rooms, old bolts, even rusty nails, were on sale, and presumably found a

market. Down the middle sauntered old men in dim old great-coats, very hooked and bearded, and offered you buttons and studs and such-like small deer. Not raucous and persistent, these old gentlemen, but leisurely strollers; they gave me the impression that they carried their trays for companionship, as other old gentlemen take a dog with them on their walks. I thought of Moses Ansell. As I went on the crowd was thicker. Dark-eyed children pottered round its legs. Then something like an Oriental touch—a pretty, black-eyed, olive-hued young girl, a red garment twisted round her and over her head, slithered in and out, sparkling and talkative. From the South, doubtless, with high cheek-bones and a sinuous gracefulness, she was the first note of colour I saw. But soon another, a strong note, accompanied by a strong voice—a man in a brilliant jockey coat and cap, mounted on his stall, shouting his thousand arguments why you should buy his waistcoats. Near him a more insinuating merchant selling watches. "Sir John Bennett—give yer my word—just look 'ow it winds—*why*, it winds like silk." But

the sellers of clothes were the more eminent artists, to several of whom I listened attentively.

And here I made an original observation. These men were not merely trying to sell their clothes: they were genuine artists in oratory, who loved their art for itself. So many people going to the Fair not to buy but to look—"all lookers, no buyers," said one disgusted trader—the orators are accustomed to an audience that has to be kept—merely as an audience—by ingenious art, and with the artistic vanity and good-humour of their race they rise to the occasion. It does them credit, I think, this gratuitous display of talent. For example, one fellow put on a coat and strutted round the top of his stall in it, showing its merits by comical movements of his vigorous hips. Then he started the price at a guinea. Now, he knew there would be no taker at that figure. With hardly a pause between the figures, but with much dramatic protest in his voice, he brought the price down by shillings to six, when I am glad to say he sold it. He had his eye on mine, and I was wearing a

comparatively new great-coat: he must have known I was not a buyer: I believe he recognised in me an ex-dramatic critic. If he will let me know when he goes on the West End boards I will ask my friends on the Press to be kind to him. The cheerful humour of all these men is remarkable, and I am apt to think it is typical of the race in business. Your true Jew does not pucker his brow and lengthen his face designing a deal: it is as easy and natural and enjoyable to him to turn a shilling into eighteenpence as it is to drink a glass of beer—a simple activity, his heritage from generations. He enjoys the art and the fun of his business: no wonder he is successful.

I turned from the road on to a side pavement. Here the chief vendibles were things to eat—whelks and cucumbers and fat olives: there may be starvation in the East, but there is also plenty. Arrived at the end of the Lane, I asked my way into Houndsditch, and after a couple of narrow streets there I was. Woe, woe! If my friends and my later reading had given me an illusion about Petticoat Lane, so far back as I can remember Houndsditch has

suggested to me all that there is of the most villainous and weird and overtly criminal. How I arrived at the idea I know not: it may have been a scene in some forgotten romance, it may have been the mere sound of the forbidding name. But though I did not expect to see anything definitely horrible, back in my mind there was a hankering after something — something — well, not after a respectable thoroughfare with omnibuses running through it, very like Kensington High Street. People who revile Jews taunt them with emerging from Houndsditch as though it were some grisly swamp — let them go there and be ashamed. But as for me, I left it hurriedly.

In a street leading back into the Lane I came upon a beautiful young Jewess. She was fresh and spotless as the dairymaid of poets' dreams, well built, supple and straight; dressed in some clinging red stuff, selling large and brightly-coloured handkerchiefs. So far nothing remarkable: my aging eyes still behold comely young women not infrequently. But here is a point. Anywhere else, surely, certainly at a charity bazaar, a pretty girl sell-

ing things, and seeing a kindly-looking man, even though middle-aged, would have tried the effect of an agreeable smile or an inviting word on his purse. But this one uttered a brusque "twopence each," turned a cold commercial eye on me for half a second, saw that I was not like a person who wanted an enormous handkerchief of many colours, and turned away at once. She was out for business, strict business as business. I liked her for it. It may be far-fetched, but I think there was a sort of native modesty in the action. I did not insult her by purchasing an enormous handkerchief I did not want.

Gradually, a little tired with the noise and pushing, I regained the top of the Lane and mounted the 'bus. It had been an experience worth having, a multitude of fresh and compelling sensations, many more than I can remember to set down. Fresh sensations are tiring, as we know, and habitual activities persist easily. Still I felt a little ashamed that I had left so many men shouting and driving bargains with undiminished vigour, while I was tired merely with looking on. Such vigour

—such liveliness! How should the able-bodied Jew fail? Also I felt mildly sorry that I had not thought of buying a memento—a handkerchief, say, from that beautiful Jewess. But no matter: I shall see her again, in a few years, belike, at the Opera or driving down Park Lane, covered with pearls and diamonds.

PLYMOUTH
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON
PRINTERS

